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NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADULT ACCELERATED PROGRAM:  
FACULTY EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY INFLUENCE  
ON STUDENT RETENTION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
IN  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

BY  
NANCY S. WAJLER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
SEPTEMBER, 2012

## Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

## Dissertation Notification of Completion

Doctoral Candidate: Nancy S. Wajler

Title of Dissertation: COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADULT ACCELERATED PROGRAM:  
FACULTY EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY INFLUENCE  
ON STUDENT RETENTION

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Date of Final Approval Meeting: September 25, 2012

We certify this dissertation, submitted by the above named candidate, is fully adequate in scope and quality to satisfactorily meet the dissertation requirement for attaining the Doctor of Education degree in the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program.

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Dennis K. Haynes  
Kenneth Ender

9/25/2012  
9/25/2012  
9/25/12

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to a very special educator, Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, Program Director of the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at National Louis University and my dissertation chair. Without the continuous support and encouragement from Dr. Lake, I could not have accomplished my dissertation. She was a role model of the kind of leadership that I admire...hard work, commitment and courage. I cannot begin to thank you for all of your support and care. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although there has been a surge in the number of adults entering accelerated academic programs at community colleges over the last decade, there has not been a similar increase in the number of adult learners who persist and achieve their degrees. This qualitative inquiry uses a case study methodology to explore in what ways educational philosophies of educators influence the persistence and graduation rates of adult students in community college accelerated programs. Data collection methods will include the creation of focus groups of both faculty and adult students in the accelerated program and faculty members taking the online version of the Zinn (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI).

Analysis of the findings will utilize the results of the Zinn's PAEI, Knowles' (1980) six assumptions of adult education as well as the emerging themes arising from the data. This study will provide information that will improve the understanding of the role of faculty educational philosophy on the successful achievement by adult learners as measured by persistence and graduation. These insights will also provide the information needed by community colleges to create a positive adult learning environment as they formulate and implement adult accelerated courses and programs and recruit faculty to teach in them.

There was no consensus among the student graduates regarding if the manner in which faculty taught had any influence on their decision to persist in the adult accelerated program. The results indicated that students reacted more positively and related better to faculty who brought real life, practical knowledge into the classroom than faculty who lectured from a theoretical perspective. Additional findings made it quite apparent that the student graduate participants possessed an intense internal desire and self-determination to be persistent and complete the necessary courses to finish a degree. Lastly, students strongly voiced the need for faculty and the



college administration to create an environment which promotes a desire to learn, which in turn motivates them to persist and complete their degree.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The intent of this study is to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influences adult learners in community college accelerated programs. This is also a descriptive study of adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs and faculty expectations of these adult learners. This chapter provides an overview of the research design as well as conveys the researcher's plan for undertaking the study. The following sections are included in this chapter: (a) the background and context of the issue, (b) the significance of the study, (c) the purpose and research questions arising from the research, (d) a brief review of literature, (e) the research design, and (f) definition of terms.

### **Background and Context of the Issue**

The need to meet the challenges specific to the adult learner continues to increase as more adults seek enrollment in community colleges. These adult learners enroll in post-secondary institutions for various reasons. Often, they are seeking additional education in order to enhance a change of careers or to better prepare themselves with the skills and knowledge required to compete in the global marketplace. Undeniably, being prepared for 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs has assumed a greater significance due to the unstable local, national and global economy.

According to Cindy Veenstra (2010), editor for the American Society of Quality, community colleges have seen an enrollment increase of over 17 percent in the past two years. There has been a greater emphasis placed on post-secondary degree completion in order to build a better 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. According to Veenstra (2010),

Typically, for education funding proposals, community colleges have been sidestepped in favor of the much more prestigious research universities and four-year colleges. Yet community colleges are the backbone for higher education access in the U. S. higher-education system; 40% of all first-time freshmen enroll at community colleges ("Community Colleges", para. 3).

The Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisors (2009) reports “that jobs requiring at least an associate degree will grow twice as fast as jobs requiring only a high school education” (p.21). President Obama has made a strong commitment to support the affordability and open access espoused by the community college mission. In President Obama’s 2009 speech at Macomb Community College, he called for five million Americans to earn degrees and certificates in the next decade in order to achieve the “goal of having the highest college graduation rate of any nation in the world”(Obama, 2009, para 24 ). Additionally, the President charges the community college system to provide students with twin benefits of higher education, “analytical and interpersonal skills,” (Obama, 2009, para. 23) so that adult learners will achieve the results they and American businesses need to keep the country competitive.

Dan M. Hull and Richard Hinckley (2007), current and past presidents of the Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD) add support to the President’s goal.

American businesses cannot succeed without a well-educated workforce, and our communities need responsible, contributing, financially independent citizens. But, most of all, every person in the United States of America should have the right to improve and to realize his or her dreams. And a high-quality, focused public education is still the key to ensuring that every American enjoys that right. (p. 3)

In order to assist adults in preparing for the global marketplace, Hull and Hinckley focused on the need to identify factors that contribute to the persistence and completion of the adult student’s educational goals. However, they believe that community colleges fail to meet the specific needs of the adult student. Hull and Hinckley believe that both the lack of understanding and embracing of the andragogical model play significant roles in the failure of colleges and universities to meet the challenges of the adult learner. Dr. Jerome Hunter, Chancellor of North Orange County Community College, stated in a foreword written for the

Hull and Hinckley article, *Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education for the Center for Occupational Research and Development*,

Through much effort and years of experience, we have learned to meet the needs of traditional age students. But we have yet come up with a process that enables us to serve the adults in our communities who are capable of earning post-secondary credential (certainly at the two-year level) but whose circumstances have thus far prevented them from doing so. (Hunter, 2007; citing in Hull & Hinckley, 2007, p. v.)

Increasing an understanding of the diverse and complex nature of the adult learner and designing educational programs that are relevant for adult learners, both in delivery modality and content, will better support adult learners to achieve their educational, career and personal goals. To assist with this endeavor, community college faculty and administrators need to create the type of surroundings and academic programs where adult students feel secure and capable of success. Engagement in adult learner centered educational programs enhances the student's persistence in completing their educational goals.

The role of community college educators encompasses the need to improve student academic success with an emphasis on the course completion, GPAs, and degree completion rates. Community colleges have inherited the stigma of a second class higher education institution as viewed through the lens of the four-year colleges and universities. Because of the community college lack of emphasis on graduation of students with some type of an associate degree, assumptions are liberally made that they are not serving students well. Townsend and Bragg (2006) indicate,

Unable to deal with such complexity, most researchers judge the value of a community college education through the lenses of the four-year college and university. From this perspective, student outcomes such as persistence, program completion, transfer and post-program employment rise to the surface as of greatest importance. It is on these terms that a substantial body of evidence has accumulated, both lauding the openness and inclusivity of community colleges but also condemning them for inadequate results. Without fully considering the institution's unique and important characteristics, it is easy to cast the community college as a "second best" higher education institution (p. xxi).

Community college educators are experts in their discipline but few have taken graduate courses in the art of teaching. Thus, they have little exposure to teaching methodologies. They are very comfortable with the concept of pedagogy (teacher-centered) but are not familiar with the concept of andragogy (student-centered).

The concept of providing course content using delivery modalities that facilitates the persistence and graduation of adult learners affords both challenges and new opportunities for community colleges. Therefore, community colleges need to craft educational programs which deliver content specifically attuned to adult learners. This study will elicit insights useful for faculty and administrators as they design and implement new accelerated adult programs as well as evaluate and improve current accelerated adult programs.

### **Significance of the Study**

Each adult student has their own reason for wanting to pursue higher education. Some individuals have not been in the classroom for twenty or thirty years, since graduating from high school, and experience trepidation about their ability to learn at this stage in their lives. Others began post-secondary education but never completed their degrees and may feel a sense of failure and embarrassment because they lack the education to advance in this very competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Whatever the reasons, the number of adults returning to community colleges is dramatically increasing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), the U.S. can count 6.8 million adult learners, defined as students ages 25 and older. These students, who once represented a minority on campus, now account for 70% of enrollment. These numbers are expected to climb rapidly as colleges look for pools of students to replace the cohort of 18-22 year olds that will start shrinking (Lumina Foundation, 2010, p. 4).

Consequently, findings from this study would benefit returning adult learners by providing direction for community colleges as new programs and services are implemented and

current programs are improved. Findings would also aid with the selection of faculty to teach in adult accelerated programs. Research has been done regarding appropriate teaching methods relevant to adults; however there is little research exploring the influence of faculty's educational philosophies related to the adult learner in accelerated programs in community colleges. This study will explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influences the persistence and graduation of adult learners in community college adult accelerated programs. Understanding and incorporating these insights into community college adult accelerated programs can benefit the programs as well as increase the persistence of these adult students, leading to improved graduation rates.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influence the persistence and graduation of adult learners in community college accelerated programs.

### **Research and Guiding Questions**

1. How and in what ways does the educational philosophies of faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs influence student program completion?
2. What are adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching strategies in community college adult accelerated programs?
3. What are faculty expectations of adult learners enrolled in community college adult accelerated programs?
4. What recommendations do adult learners have for faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs?

5. What recommendations does faculty have for adult learners to enhance their persistence and graduation in community college adult accelerated programs?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Because the purpose of the study is to explore the complex influence of faculty educational philosophy on the adult student enrolled in an accelerated program, care was given to situate the research in a more eclectic context. Toward that end, the conceptual framework incorporates the lenses of educational philosophy and adult education. A review of the literature provides a brief overview of the following: (a) the history and purpose of community college, (b) concepts and theories specific to the adult learner, and (c) Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI).

### **Historical Background and Context**

From their inception, the community college's primary purpose was to support the first and second year of instruction for the four year universities. When the community colleges' mission was first conceptualized near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the premise was to create these educational institutions that provided opportunities for individuals to begin, pursue, or obtain their educational objectives close to home (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Later, the mission solidified into one where the community college would provide affordable, accessible and academic programs that would serve the needs of the local community. These institutions became the hallmark for open access to post-secondary opportunities. Therefore, a primary purpose of the community college, almost since its inception, has been to serve the academic needs of both traditional and non-traditional students who vary in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic and prior work and educational experiences.

The demographics of community colleges are changing. Today “thirteen percent of students are older than 40, and 40 percent are between 22 and 39” (Veenstra, 2010, para. 7). The educational needs of the American public are constantly changing. Befitting the community college mission, the focus of the community college cannot be static but must adapt to these challenges and be responsive to the nation and their community’s ever-changing economic, social, and political circumstances. As the number of adult learners enrolling at community colleges continues to increase, there is a need to better understand how these students learn and how to incorporate the andragogical delivery modality into course content.

### **Adult Learners**

While many educators have known for centuries that adult learners require a different approach to learning, interestingly in many higher education institutions such as community colleges, this approach has not been actively adopted. John Dewey strongly believed in a learner-centered educational philosophy, finding the teacher-focused approach as falling short of achieving the goal of education because of the emphasis on authoritarian instruction, whether the students are adults or children (Westbrook, 1993). Dewey discussed his disapproval with traditional education in his book, *Experience and Education*. He stated that traditional education is imposed on students from the outside and from above and, therefore, students find this material difficult to understand and irrelevant to their needs. Dewey (1938) concluded that

Traditional education relies for its aims, methods of instruction, and discipline on things handed down from the past. It prevents active participation by pupils in development of what is taught, which is static, taught as a finished product, and the cultural product of a society that assumed the future would be much like the past (citing in “Leaders in the”, Teachnet, 2010, para.3).

To remedy the lack of freedom and natural development caused by traditional education, Dewey offers the concept of progressive education. Dewey asserted that the progressive education provides a necessary relationship between the process of actual experience and education.



Lindeman (1926) shared Dewey's focus on the need of students to explore and to experience situations and not to quietly accept formal curriculum and its content. Lindeman stated four principles of adult education that need to be incorporated in order to create a meaningful learning experience for the adult student. These four principles are: (a) education is a life-long process; (b) adult education is non-vocational; (c) adult education should emphasize situations and not subjects; and (d) adult education should place primary emphasis on the learner's experience (Lindeman, 1926). He advocated for the need for learning groups, or cohorts, and the moving away from the idea that knowledge can come only from the teacher and not students (Nixon-Ponder, 1995). Lindeman believed in the value of creating curriculum that reflected the learners' experiences and that would be learner-centered. Lindeman was one of the first educators to talk about andragogy as "the true method of adult learning", a concept that was further developed by Malcolm Knowles (Nixon-Ponder, 1995, p. 2).

Malcolm Knowles (1980) is the principle contributor to adult education in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, Knowles adapted the European concept of andragogy which he defined as the "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 43). Knowles' definition of adult learning became a definitive concept as educators wanted to separate the field of adult education from the education of children.

As a champion of andragogy, Knowles (1980) originally introduced five assumptions of adult learning and later added a sixth assumption of adult learning. According to Knowles, the original five assumptions, forming the basis of adult education, were: (a) adults arrive at a self-concept and need to be seen as capable of self-direction; (b) has an accumulation of life experiences that add to the classroom experience; (c) assures and reinforces why a subject matter

is important to learn; (d) is solution oriented and has practical application; and (e) adults are motivated by intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. Knowles, with the assistance of Holton and Swanson (1998), recognized an additional assumption to the understanding of adult learners. The additional assumption that was introduced was the notion that adult readiness to learn depends on their immediate need to know information.

The basic premise of Knowles' (1980) concept of adult education is that most adults as they mature are motivated from within, need a practical, real life application of knowledge, and bring prior knowledge and experience into the classroom. In return, adult students want to be treated with respect and dignity and want to contribute to their classroom experience. Knowles indicated there should be, "a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers" (p. 47). Adults are not interested in a lecture/inquisition format which is often utilized in the traditional academic setting.

Knowles identified that as adult learners reach a maturity level they relate to educational experiences which will relate to and draw from their business world experience. In addition to Knowles' belief that adult students need a student center learning approach, adult students also need a sense of connection to the faculty and classroom environment. Adult learners tend to validate their academic experience in the classroom primarily through their connection with faculty. Laura Rendón's theory of validation helps to explain the need for faculty and staff to initiate early and consistent contact with the adult learner in a post-secondary environment.

Laura Rendón (2002), professor and chair of educational leadership and policy studies at Iowa State University in her research, *Community College Puente: A Validating Model of Education*, suggests encouragement and support of faculty greatly impact the development of Latino students in an educational environment. Her research, entitled the Puente Project, was

established by a single college in 1981 and has grown to incorporate 38 community colleges throughout California. The importance of her insights applies to the adult learner. As Rendón, stated, “In- and out-of-class validating experiences are especially important with nontraditional student populations such as returning adults, low-income students, first generation students, and many minority students from working-class backgrounds” (p. 644). Rendón referred to six elements in her validation theory which are extremely applicable to the adult learners in community colleges. Rendón’s (2002) elements include: (a) the importance of initiating consistent contact with students, (b) contact will increase self-esteem, (c) the need to get students involved, (d) students need affirmations and support inside and outside the classroom, (e) the need to continue the validation process throughout the student’s academic experience, and (f) that validation and affirmation take place within the first couple of weeks of the start of classes otherwise the student becomes frustrated, loses confidence and leaves the academic environment.

These six elements are very relevant to students who attend adult accelerated programs within the community college environment. Many adult students have had little if any college experience before acceptance into adult accelerated programs. Undoubtedly, program enhancements tailored for adult students can enhance persistence leading to an increase in completion rates.

### **Philosophy of Education**

Lorraine Zinn (1991) created the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) as an instrument exclusively designed to identify adult educators’ personal philosophy of education. The PAEI was designed to provide and to compare faculty educational philosophies within the field of adult education. Zinn indicated that there is no right or wrong educational philosophy.

Zinn's inventory was designed to provide information about one's own beliefs, not to make judgments about those beliefs.

Lorraine Zinn (1991) in her book, *Adult Learning Methods* stated,

When the adult educator engages in the practice of education, certain beliefs about life in general are applied to the practice. These beliefs constitute the basis for a philosophy of education. As with the life philosophy, the philosophy of education may be unrecognized, internally inconsistent, and only partially formulated (p. 40).

In her research, Zinn conceptualized five educational philosophies and encouraged educators to become aware of their educational philosophy and teach according to this philosophy. Her five philosophies include: liberalism, behaviorism, progressivism, humanism and radicalism. Zinn believed that educators might easily have one to two dominant educational philosophies. She also believed that most educators are not aware of their educational philosophy, and thus, there could be a mismatch between their educational philosophy, their teaching objectives, and the needs of their students.

According to the research of Elizabeth J. Tisdell and Edward W. Taylor (1999), the educational philosophies serve as the framework for faculty. A teacher's educational philosophy, whether declared or not, serves as a tool directing their teaching style and strategies. Furthermore, Tisdell and Taylor believe that having the understanding of one's educational philosophy is important to one's actual practice and decision making process in the classroom. They further believe that some educational philosophies can and do interfere with the learning process especially when it relates to teaching adult learners.

The conceptual framework for the study focuses on the interrelationship of Knowles' (1980) andragogical model of adult learning concept and Zinn's (1991) educational philosophies. Research in understanding how faculty educational philosophy influences the adult learner is still needed. There is little research which explores and/or explains the persistence of adult learners

enrolled in community college accelerated programs. As the enrollment of adult learners continues to grow at community colleges, a corresponding interest in how to increase their graduation rates is also rising. The intent of this study is to provide information and insights to better serve the needs of this growing population of adults, which can lead to improved degree completion rates.

### **Description of the Study Design**

All research requires a clearly articulated plan and a systematic process of collecting data, analyzing results and interpreting information in order to better understand a phenomenon, to answer questions or to contribute to the knowledge base of the field. The intent of this study is to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influences adult learners in community college adult accelerated programs. This study is a qualitative research inquiry using a case study methodology situated in an interpretive paradigm. This section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the following: (a) the qualitative paradigm and the case study methodology; (b) site and selection criteria; (c) data collection methods; and (d) data analysis techniques.

### **Qualitative Research Design**

Qualitative research focuses on answering the how and what of a problem, issue or concern rather than determining any cause and effect. Qualitative research is interested in “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they contribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Qualitative research conveys that the underlying nature of the qualitative inquiry is an ever-changing phenomenon. Therefore, it recognizes and understands that the nature of qualitative studies is a snapshot in time within a particular natural setting. “Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world; this means that qualitative researchers study occurrences in

their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Merriam (1998) indicates that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Quantitative research has a narrow focus and starts with a specific hypothesis, whereas a qualitative approach has a wide focus and relies on the researcher interpretation of what was heard and observed.

In selecting an appropriate research design, a choice can be guided by several factors as the research is being posed. Qualitative inquiry tends to collect data within a natural context; it seeks individuals’ perspectives regarding the research topic and uses factors which are discovered to identify emerging themes. Creswell (2007) indicates “this up-close information, gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context, is a major characteristic of qualitative research” (p. 37). Creswell contends that qualitative research gathers multiple sources of data to build a rich, thick and in-depth set of themes which allow for a better understanding of complex phenomena.

Furthermore, qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. The researchers’ interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understanding (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

Qualitative research is undertaken to better understand the complexity of an issue or concern. Since the intent of this study is to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influences adult learners in community college accelerated programs, situating it in the qualitative paradigm is appropriate for the research purpose.

Interpretive qualitative research begins with a viewpoint or general assumption, or it is constructed through the lens of the phenomenon being studied. This phenomenological lens is centered on the social, political or historical context of the problem being studied. Creswell (2007) identifies interpretive qualitative research as

an approach to qualitative research that has become interwoven into the core characteristics of qualitative research. It recognizes the self-reflective nature of qualitative research and emphasizes the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents information (p. 248).

The researcher has the responsibility to gather the data and information as well as analyze it through multiple lenses to interpret the findings.

### **Case Study**

The purpose of the study guides the selection of the paradigm. This study is exploratory in nature in order to better understand a little known phenomenon which places the research in the qualitative interpretive paradigm. This study will use a single case study methodology bounded by the purpose and location of a single community college in Illinois. Merriam (1998) supports the method of using case studies in the field of education. Moreover, this research is a descriptive study of adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs and faculty expectations of these adult learners. A single case approach typically allows for a more extensive data collection and permits a more in-depth analysis. Creswell (2007) states that

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (p. 73).

Furthermore Creswell (2007) indicates “a case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding” (p. 74).

Yin (2009) defines an exemplary case study as one that has the following qualities: (a) the case study must be significant, (b) the case study must be complete, (c) the case study must consider alternative perspectives, (d) the case study must display sufficient evidence, and (e) the case study must be composed in an engaging manner. A case study is considered to be significant if it is (a) an individual case, or cases, that are unusual and of general interest, (b) has underlying issues that are nationally important, either in theoretical terms or in policy or practical terms, or (c) meet both conditions. Therefore, a case study methodology is appropriate for this study.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection methods for this study will include faculty focus groups, student focus groups, surveys, field notes, and Zinn’s (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory Instrument. Purposeful sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where participants are selected who will provide relevant information regarding the research topic. Purposeful sampling facilitates the selection of research participants who can provide rich, thick data to answer the guiding questions. Johnson and Christensen (2004) identify purposive sampling as “the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest and then tries to locate individuals who have those characteristics” (p. 239).

This study will also include a second sampling technique, maximum variation. Maximum variation sampling involves identifying and finding participants representing the widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study. According to Creswell



(2007), maximum variation sampling “documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns” (p. 127), and most importantly, strengthens the transferability of the study findings.

[Maximum variation sampling] consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different in the criteria. This approach is often selected because when a researcher maximizes differences at the beginning of the study, it increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives—an ideal in qualitative research (Cresswell, 2007, p. 126).

In order to enhance the analysis of the findings to include the broadest of perspectives, maximum variation sampling technique for the adult students will be employed. This will allow for the identification and selection of participants that represent “the widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79).

### **Site selection**

The site selected for this research encompasses a single campus in the Midwest region of the United States that offers a comprehensive adult accelerated program. This type of adult accelerated program is known at this institution as Fast Track. This site was selected because it has offered adult accelerated certificate and degree programs for adult learners since the spring of 2004 and has had a significant number of students enrolled. The two degrees offered as accelerated programs are Associates in Arts and Associates in Applied Arts in three programs: Management, Marketing, and Computer Information. The number of adult students attending has grown exponentially since the accelerated program opened in 2004. Annually, the number of students enrolled grew from 103 in 2004 to 622 in 2009. Since graduating its first class, there have been 284 graduates.

## **Participant Selection**

To answer the guiding questions of the study, two groups of study participants will be used. The first group of study participants will be the adult educators teaching in the adult accelerated or Fast Track program between the academic years of 2007 and 2009. These accelerated programs include faculty teaching in the following accelerated programs: the Associates of Arts Degree and Associates in Applied Arts Degree in Management, Associates in Applied Arts Degree in Marketing, and Associates in Applied Arts Degree in Computer Information Systems.

The second group of study participants will be the adult students who participated in the adult accelerated Fast Track program between the academic years of 2007 and 2009 academic years. This group is then further divided into those that graduated and those that did not. One focus group will consist of those adult learners who have successfully completed all the degree requirements for an associate's degree in the accelerated format. The second focus group will consist of those adult learners who did not complete all the necessary coursework to obtain their associate's degree in the accelerated format. Participants will complete the Participant Consent forms which can be found in appendices A and B.

## **Focus Groups**

The primary data collection method was the use of three focus groups: one of faculty and two of students (student graduates and student non-graduates). The focus group used semi-structured interview questions, which allows a systematically and simultaneously questioning of several individuals.

There are advantages in using focus groups. The advantages include that focus groups are a socially-oriented research method that can capture real-life data in a social environment. They also allow for flexibility, have high face validity, produce speedy results and are usually

low in cost. In addition, the group dynamics of a focus group often bring forth aspects of the topic that may not have been anticipated by the researcher. The focus group questions can be found in appendices C, D, and E. The focus group session interview process and interview questions was enhanced and strengthened by conducting a pilot session with representatives of the participant groups. Those in the pilot were not eligible for inclusion in the study.

### **Demographic Survey**

A demographic survey was given to each member of the focus groups. The demographic survey questions can be found in appendices F and G. This provided additional information and basic data in which to contextually situate the findings.

### **Zinn Survey Instrument**

All faculty study participants took Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). The Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory questions can be found in appendix H. The inventory is designed only to give faculty insight about their educational philosophy and about their beliefs about adult instruction. A teacher's educational philosophy, whether previously declared or not, serves as a tool which guides his/her teaching style and instructional strategies. Awareness of one's educational philosophy is helpful to the understanding of one's actual practice in the classroom. Most importantly, understanding one's educational philosophy can affect adult learners and thus influences the persistence and graduation of adult learners in community college accelerated programs.

### **Field Notes**

Field notes were used as another information gathering tool. There are two types of field notes: observational and reflective. According to Merriam (2009), field notes can help the reader

feel present at the site with the researcher. Merriam further states, “field notes become the raw data from which the study’s findings eventually emerge” (p. 128).

Observational field notes were detailed and provide descriptions of the participants, the setting, the activities and behaviors of the participants. Reflective field notes contain the researcher’s feelings, reactions, hunches, and initial interpretations. Reflective field notes in particular will be used to keep the focus of the data collection on the study participants and not the knowledge and perception of the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis will consist of coding and categorizing the data and information, which will lead to patterns and themes. Analysis of the data will be facilitated by the use of a priori themes garnered from the conceptual framework of the study. Zinn’s (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) will also be analyzed to identify the faculty participants’ educational philosophy. Pre-cautionary measures were taken not to include any information or material that would not relate to the a priori themes. All emergent themes were captured and included to strengthen the findings.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Accelerated Adult Courses:* By definition, accelerated programs are structured for adult students by taking less time than conventional or traditional programs to attain college credit, certifications or degrees (Wlodkowski, 2003).

*Andragogy:* Andragogy is defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

*Adult Learner:* Adult learner is defined as individuals who are 25 years of age, or older, and are involved in postsecondary learning activities (Voorhees & Lingenfelte, 2003).

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 presents a brief literature review which describes the arduous, historical progress of adult education. The andragogical approach, or student centered delivery of education to adult learners, is closely examined. Chapter 2 also reviews the foundation for understanding the challenges of creating a more favorable educational environment for adult learners. Furthermore, this chapter provides the theoretical framework of the five educational philosophies and the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) of Lorraine Zinn (1991) and the six assumptions of adult learners as espoused by Malcolm Knowles (1980).

Chapter 3 describes the study design, which is a qualitative inquiry situated in the interpretative paradigm, and explores a phenomenon of which little is known. This study employs a case study methodology to gain an understanding of the accelerated adult program from the participants' perspective. This chapter incorporates components of intrinsic case methodology as the research focuses on a single case which is bound by the selected faculty and adult learners' perspective in an accelerated adult program at one community college. In order to gain the most relevant data, purposeful sampling was the most appropriate method to elicit information from those participants most relevant to this research. To assist with consistency and systemically analyzing data in this research, the data analysis framework developed by Creswell (2007) will be employed. The ways and means of fostering trustworthiness of the research process was described. Two limitations to the study were identified: (a) the case sample was limited to a single community college and (b) participants could have selective memory or limited recall. Ethical considerations were highlighted and identified as well as background information regarding the researcher as a research instrument.

Chapter 4 displays a coherent and methodical process which was used to establish the transparency of the research process and credibility of the finding. This chapter provides research data gathered from multiple data sources. These sources include: (a) an online demographic survey, and (b) Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Educational Inventory. The data garnered from the survey and from Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Educational Inventory was summarized in a variety of tables and figures. Demographic information was organized by participant groups: faculty and students; these groups, who have different perceptions regarding the adult accelerated program assisted in establishing the framework for data collection and data analysis. In addition, the student demographics were further classified by students who completed a degree and by students who did not complete a degree in an adult accelerated modality.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of data from three focus group responses. Analysis from the focus group's transcripts provides additional data and information to answer the purpose of the study regarding the persistence and graduation of adult learners in a community college adult accelerated program. Analysis of the data is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the three focus group responses and the second section is an analysis of the aggregate information and data from multiple data sources by the two a priori themes. The findings are interpreted and explored through the lens of Knowles' (1980) andragogical model and Zinn's (1991) educational philosophies.

Chapter 6 presents the research findings and conclusions of the study; this information can be used to improve the understanding of the role of faculty educational philosophy on the successful achievement of adult learners in accelerated associate degree programs. This concluding chapter summarizes the research findings and discusses implications for community

colleges. It also provides insights for community college administrators and presents information which can be used to create a positive adult learning environment and to improve adult accelerated courses and programs. In addition, this information can be used as a guideline in recruiting faculty who will be hired to teach accelerated adult courses. The use of this information will lead to persistence and retention of adult learners. As a result of the research findings, the Wajler adult accelerated program improvement model, which includes three components: (a) faculty professional development; (b) administrative staff professional development; and (c) student orientation for adult learners, was developed to address the needs of adult learners in accelerated classes. The model is presented in chapter 6 and is followed by recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Community colleges are confronted with new challenges today as the demographics of their students are radically shifting. Not only is there an increase in the number of students, but also there is a broadening of the diversity of these students in terms of their ages, abilities, demands and needs. One such group of students enrolling in increasing numbers is collectively known as adult learners. These individuals differ from traditional-age students in that they are highly motivated to obtain their post-secondary degree, are self-directed and they possess years of work and life experiences to draw upon as they enter each course. They are uniquely characterized by a combination of roles and responsibilities associated with adulthood and bring a unique perspective to the community college learning environment.

Each adult learner has his or her own reason for wanting to pursue post-secondary education. Local and national economic conditions are the impetus for many adult learners to continue their education. These individuals desire to remain in the workforce and possibly advance to positions of greater responsibility. Meeting the educational goals of these students is stretching the limits of the community college resources. Providing educational opportunities to meet the demands of the adult learner is a growing challenge for community colleges, particularly for those that offer accelerated academic programs.

Community colleges have a strong interest in serving the adult learner. First, they are the largest and most rapidly growing demographic group of students on community college campuses. Secondly, an intense competition exists between proprietary colleges and community colleges to enroll these students.

One way to do so is to offer adult-centered curricula. Adult-centered curricula is of great interest to adult learners, enabling them to complete their educational objective at an accelerated



pace. Adult learners are interested in academic programs that are time and content intense and provide a quick turnaround, allowing them to focus on getting back into the workforce or advancing in their career. In general, these accelerated programs are comprised of all or any combination of Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS) and/or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees as well as certificates.

The colleges with accelerated programs targeting the adult learner will capture this population more readily than those colleges offering courses and programs in the traditional format. Accelerated programs have been referred to and categorized in regards to the program intensity and accelerated format rather than being described in terms of faculty delivery modality. They are structured as a cohort model where a group of students take classes on a consistent evening during the week.

While accelerated programs may initially attract adult learners, what is most important is what takes place in the classroom to retain them until they complete their academic objectives. It is becoming increasingly clear that faculty play a critical role in the persistence, retention and subsequent graduation of adult learners in accelerated programs at community colleges. However, there is a need for faculty to gain a much better understanding as to how to create a learning environment for adult learners who want to obtain the highest level of education appropriate for each of them (Yates, 1996).

The literature does not offer an increased understanding of how and in what ways faculty teaching in adult accelerated programs can improve their practices. This lack of information places adult learners in jeopardy of not meeting the goals that brought them to these types of community college programs in the first place. A gap within current and relevant literature exists in regards to the educational needs and factors that facilitate the persistence and retention

of adult learners. This study will address that division and also provide the information needed by community colleges to create a positive adult learning environment, as they formulate and implement adult accelerated courses and programs and recruit faculty to teach in them.

This study, based on the conceptual framework that comes from the disciplines of education and sociology, explores how and in what ways the faculty educational philosophy influences the retention and graduation of adult learners in community-college accelerated programs. The review of the literature begins with an overview of community colleges and its role in meeting the needs of its changing population, specifically adult students. The educational philosophies of Lorraine Zinn and their relevance to faculty teaching in adult accelerated programs will also be examined. In addition, the needs of the adult learner as well as the factors that contribute to the retention of the adult learner will be discussed. The literature review will also analyze the role faculty, as adult educators; play in improving the persistence, retention and graduation rates of adult learners.

### **History of Community Colleges**

The mission of the community college has been to serve the academic needs of all students regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, work or educational experiences. When the mission of community colleges was first conceptualized near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the premise was to create local institutions which provided opportunities for individuals to pursue their first two years of a university education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Educational leaders, William Rainey Harper, of the University of Chicago, and David Starr Jordan, of Stanford University, were instrumental in providing the framework for the first community college, which opened in Joliet, Illinois, in 1901.

At their inception, community colleges were created to be affordable, increasing access and educational opportunities to those in their communities. Today, the mission of the

community college has broadened to encompass the following five characteristics: (1) transfer programs, (2) career and technical programs, (3) developmental (define) programs, (4) continuing education programs, and (5) community service programs. These characteristics separate community colleges from traditional four year colleges by the distinct curricula they offer. Several prominent advocates recommend this more comprehensive approach for the community college system:

Several advocates of the early junior college, such as Walther Crosby Eells and Leonard Koos, were adamant supporters of the broader mission that would go beyond transfer. They suggested that vocational programs should prepare students for immediate employment in semi-professional occupations after completing two years of college (Bragg & Townsend, 2006, p. 54).

There is no doubt that the mission of the community college has evolved during the past 100 years in response to social, political and economic changes. To better understand this evolution, Kevin Dougherty (1994) conceptualized the changing community college mission through various theoretical perspectives: functionalism, instrumentalist Marxism, institutionalism, and state relative autonomy. According to Dougherty, these four philosophies reflect the evolution of the mission and functions of the community college.

The functionalism position prescribes that the community college's main function is to serve the needs of the local community. This philosophy posits that community colleges not only provide access to students by being local, affordable, career and technical-training oriented, but also liberal arts focused. The goal is to be responsive to the needs of the students, business, industry and local communities.

The instrumentalist Marxism philosophy, conceptualized and spearheaded by the findings of Burton Clark (1960), is critical of community colleges. This philosophical approach very directly and painfully depicts the adversarial relationship between educational excellence and educational realities. Clark (1960) posits that the "open door" mission of the community college

did nothing more than prolong the weeding-out process of those students who could not successfully complete college level coursework elsewhere. As a result, the “cooling out” concept was conceived. It was not ideal for academic excellence, but it did address the reality that not every person coming out of high school was ready for a 4-year university. Some students need to ease into the higher education experience by attending a community college first.

By the late 1980s, Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel (1989) suggested that the main impact of community colleges was to be a place of “vocationalization” for local businesses. Brint and Karabel saw community colleges competing for resources and recognition within the educational realm. They said that community colleges no longer just prepared students for junior or senior level college education but rather provided for a more vocational and career focused preparation (Krabel, 1989).

The state relative autonomy theory, introduced by Dougherty (1994), blended the instrumentalist Marxism with the institutionalism. The theory supported the vocationalization of community colleges; it was grounded in political sociology and the capitalist philosophy, which believed that providing educational opportunities for local students would benefit business and industry.

Table 1 compares Dougherty’s theoretical perspectives of the evolving community college mission and its effect on adult accelerated programs.

Table 1. *Comparison of the Effects of Community College Theoretical Perspectives on Adult Accelerated Programs*

<b>Community College Theoretical Perspective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key Effect on Adult Accelerated Programs</b>
Functionalism	The philosophical purpose is to serve the need of local	Local accessibility

	communities.	Affordable  Relevancy for job training with local workforce development
Instrumentalist Marxism	The philosophical approach is that universities support the community college to keep less desirable students out of universities.  The community college is seen as an instrument of the dominant social class, and is assumed to operate at its behest.	Focus is placed on vocational programs for working class adults deflecting less desirable students universities away from 4-year.
Institutionalism	The philosophical approach is that community colleges' focus on vocations due to their own institutional need of competing for resources with other universities.	Establishes a more "open door" philosophy, offering more alternative vocationalized community college programming.
State Relative Autonomy	This approach combines the institutional theory and the instrumentalist Marxism theory.	Provides the framework for the comprehensive community college system, offering traditional coursework for transfer as well as vocational career training for working adults  Supported by government initiatives.

The GI Bill of Rights and the Truman Commission Report, in 1948, provided a window of opportunity for veterans and others to obtain a post-secondary degree. The GI Bill, officially known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, addressed the academic and vocational needs of returning WWII veterans. The bill provided funding for education and a year of unemployment compensation, enabling veterans to meet living expenses while attending college. Undoubtedly, the GI Bill had an important influence on the lives of returning veterans. It also had a positive impact on higher education and helped grow the economy.

Out of more than 15 million American veterans who served in World War II, almost eight million used the G.I. Bill to obtain an education after the war (Greenberg, 2008). The increasing

number of veterans who enrolled in higher education changed the landscape amongst American colleges and universities. New facilities were built to accommodate the large number of students. Most of these structures were part of an expanding community college network designed for the non-traditional student.

In community colleges, new vocational and professional programs were instituted to meet the demands of what the veterans wanted to see in the classroom. The student population was no longer limited to those between the ages of 18 and 23. Veterans brought with them a maturity and an eagerness to learn, characteristics which differentiated them from some traditional students. Once veterans entered the classrooms, an irreversible trend began in which more individuals, from all societal groups and ages, accessed higher education and training to secure a more stable and successful future. Programs ranged from training in specific vocations to preparation for enrolling in the country's elite educational institutions.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman appointed the Commission on Higher Education for American Democracy, an organization created to reexamine the U.S. higher education system in terms of its objectives, methods, and facilities within the context of the social role that education encompasses. Their findings set in motion a substantial shift in the country's expectation about who should and who could attend college.

The Commission on Higher Education supported growth of two-year colleges across the nation, suggesting they be known as community colleges. These community colleges were to offer courses and programs that would directly serve the needs of local communities by providing academic coursework as well as vocational programs for working adults, minorities and women. The democratization of higher education, as a result of the Truman Commission

Report and the GI Bill, paralleled the evolving generic mission of the community college, which was to provide greater availability of educational opportunities in local communities.

The mission of the community college has been and will remain to serve the educational needs of its community constituents. The responsibility of community college educators is to improve academic success, with an emphasis on boosting retention and completion rates. This demands that community colleges provide access to students through being local and offering affordable programs as well as career-focused training and education. Community colleges should provide students with the opportunity for meaningful learning experiences, from which adults can gain employment.

The numbers do not lie. According to Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, “Sixty-three percent of the nation’s jobs require some type of post-secondary education. That figure has increased from the mid-1970s, when only 30 percent of jobs required any education beyond high school” (Gonzalez, 2011, para 4).

Befitting the community college mission, the focus of the community college is not static but rather continues to change in response to economic, social, and political circumstances. One example of this is the development of new accelerated programs that accommodate the adult learner (Gonzalez, 2011). This is important both for the country and the individual as the economy changes, increasing the need for workforce training and retraining. However, these degree and certificate career programs need to be offered in accelerated formats, allowing people to enter or re-enter the workforce as soon as possible. Jamie Merisotis, president of the Lumina Foundation for Education stated,

Degree acceleration is important to the economy because it brings more people into the workforce sooner. And it’s important to students because for many, especially those under financial pressure, time is the enemy. The longer it takes them to complete a

degree program, the more at risk they are for dropping out and getting pushed back to low-skilled, low-wage jobs (Gonzalez, 2011, para 11).

The aging of the American population is expected to continue to be a driving force on the community college mission as it changes and evolves to meet the needs of nontraditional learners. Today, there are approximately 78 million Baby Boomers in the United States. Baby Boomers exhibit a strong desire not only to find gainful employment as they retire from one career path and transition to new careers and new lifestyles, but they also want to continue purposeful, meaningful and personally rewarding careers (MetLife Foundation, 2007). As a stable economy returns and Baby Boomers feel that they can slowly retire and move to part-time or volunteer positions, there is concern that there will not be enough workers to fill these vacated jobs, even with Generation X and Echo Boomers waiting in the wings. This trend creates a new student market, driven by the demands of adults, that needs to be addressed at community colleges with adult accelerated programs.

The demand for qualified, trained workers will continue to increase, and the need for education and re-training will be constant. All three generations, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Echo Boomers, will require additional training and education in order to remain competitive in today's job market. This study explores how and in what ways faculty's educational philosophy influences adult learners in community-college accelerated programs, providing insights for community college leaders. This is also a descriptive study of how faculty understanding of their educational philosophy fosters adult learners' persistence and retention in accelerated programs.

### **Adult Learners Defined**

The definition of an adult, according to the U.S. legal system, differs from state to state. An adult is a person who has attained the age of majority. The age of majority is relevant in



matters such as guardianships, emancipation, alcohol purchases, legal standings, and licensing. In general, an adult is someone who has attained the rights and responsibilities of adulthood. These rights include the consent for marriage and the right to vote. Voting rights are implicitly confirmed under the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, and regardless of state law, an individual has the right to vote at the age of 18. It is also the age that an individual is considered by law to be responsible for their own actions. This includes contractual obligations and liability for negligence. So, for all intents and purposes an individual is considered an adult at 18 years old.

In 1974, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, or the Buckley Amendment) was established, implementing regulations germane to educational institutions that receive federal funding under a program administrated by the U.S. Department of Education. These regulations stipulated that community colleges must provide students with access to their educational records, an opportunity to seek to have the records amended, and some control over the disclosure of information from the records. Any student over 18 years of age is protected by FERPA. According to this amendment, students 18 years of age or older are considered adults and have access to their own educational records, which conversely means their parents and/or guardians do not have access to their educational records.

Although the legal definition of an adult has been declared, defining an adult learner by age remains unclear; even various government entities cannot agree on a single age denoting the adult learner. The U.S. Department of Education (2007), in their *Annual Report to Congress 2004-05* (2007), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (2009), in their *Public Agenda for College and Career Success Report*, identifies adult learners as those individuals 25 years of age or older involved in post-secondary learning activities. However, according to 2010 – 2011

guidelines set by Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), an adult is defined by the following criteria: (a) any individual who is 24 years of age; (b) any individual who has served in the U.S. Armed Forces or is a National Guard or Reserve; (c) any individual who is married or has been married; (d) any individual who has been declared an emancipated minor as determined by a state court decision; (e) any individual who is a single parent; and (f) any individual who is homeless or does not have a regular and adequate housing arrangement. Although various definitions of an adult learner exist, it is apparent that the post-secondary student is described as 23 – 24 years of age or older.

### **Adult Learners in Accelerated Academic Programs**

Community colleges that are offering accelerated academic programs, or community colleges that are contemplating the development and implementation of these types of programs, are confronted with unique and complex challenges. These challenges present themselves in a confluence of problems such as issues and concerns that arise from students and their needs as well as from program policies, procedures and coursework, all of which must be addressed. If not structured, implemented and delivered well, accelerated academic programs for the adult learner will not be successful.

Adult learners are more self-supporting than are traditional-aged students due to full-and part-time employment. Adult learners bring a larger amount of experience to the classroom whether from their job or life. They may be parents, either single or married, and often are involved in community vocational activities.

Other differences between adult learners and traditional aged students is that many adult learners have not been in the classroom for 20 or 30 years, since their graduation from high school, and feel great trepidation regarding their ability to learn at this point in their lives.

Others began their post-secondary education but they never completed their degrees and they often feel shrouded by a sense of failure as well as embarrassment about the lack of education that will make them competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Yet others are seeking degrees in a new career and are tentative in their capability to change occupations. Each adult learner has his or her own personal reasons for wanting to pursue additional education. It is the mission of the community college to assist adults in achieving their educational, vocational and personal goals.

It is a difficult endeavor for adult accelerated programs to provide academic programs and services that meet adult students where they are at a particular time in their lives. Adult accelerated programs need to foster the type of learning environment that enables adult learners to feel secure and capable of successfully engaging in educational activities. This will help facilitate the completion of their educational objectives. It is a responsibility of the administrators of these accelerated programs, and the faculty who teach in them, to assure this happens.

College administrators need to make a strong commitment to create an adult friendly learning environment in order for adult students to remain enrolled, persist and achieve their academic goals. Doing so will enable these adults to stay competitive in an ever-changing marketplace. In addition, faculty must promote an environment for adult students to learn and have the greatest chance to obtain the highest level of education in order to emerge as leaders of the future (Yates, 1996). Hull and Hinckley (2007) in their report, *Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education*, address why the challenges of the non-traditional student must be met:

Every American who needs and wants a “second chance” in public education should get one. The reasons should be obvious. American businesses cannot succeed without a

well-educated workforce, and our communities need responsible, contributing, financially independent citizens. But, most of all, every person in the United States of America should have the right to improve and to realize his or her dreams. And a high-quality, focused public education is still the key to ensuring that every American enjoys that right (p. 3).

Hull and Hinckley (2007) identify factors that contribute to the failures of adult learners who begin the path to a college education but do not achieve their educational goals. The researchers believe the lack of retention and degree completion is the result of the failure of public post-secondary systems, and more specifically, the community college to meet the needs of the adult student. Hull and Hinckley (2007) suggest that the failure of faculty to understand and embrace the andragogical model of teaching plays a significant role in preventing adult students from meeting their educational challenges. They further suggest that faculty move beyond the pedagogical belief that learning is a mere acquisition of new knowledge and information and towards the andragogical perspective that learning consists of questioning existing assumptions, values and concepts.

The findings of this study will benefit adult learners by providing community colleges with direction, as they implement new accelerated academic programs and pertinent services. The student perspectives will aid with the selection of faculty who are hired to teach in adult-accelerated programs. Faculty who understand and implement appropriate teaching methods, which are relevant to adult learners, greatly influence the retention and graduation rates of adult learners. Community college administration will gain insights as to how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influence the persistence of adult learners.

### **Persistence and Retention**

Persistence in completing their studies and retention of students has been topics of interest in higher education for many years. Recently, however, these topics have taken on newer and greater significance in light of the focus by President Barack Obama on increasing

national graduation rates. Figures released by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) showed, as of Fall 2009, retention rates for full-time students at all types of post-secondary institutions was 72%; for part-time students, the rate was 43% (Kolowich, 2011).

Defined in various ways, persistence and retention are often used interchangeably. However, they are actually attributable to different entities: (a) the individual (persists), leading to his or her goal such as graduation, whereas (b) the college undertakes activities, strategies and plans to (retain) students. In general, the retention rate is seen as a measure of how many freshmen complete their first year coursework and enroll as sophomores in the fall of the following year. The persistence rate, on the other hand, measures if the entire student body enrolls each year until they graduate. The NCES defines retention rates in the conventional sense as the proportion of first-time students who enroll each fall term and who re-enroll the following fall term (Kolowich, 2011). Horstmanshorf and Zimitat (2008) define persistence as “the individual student’s efforts to seek encouragement and support to preserve in his or her studies despite the challenges that he or she may face” (p. 1). Retention is the overall position of “institutional interventions made to retain the student” (p. 2).

Research on persistence and retention has also been strongly influenced by the theoretical model of student persistence brought forth by Tinto (1993), who proposed that the level of integration between personal characteristics and attributes influence students’ decisions to remain committed to their course of study as well as the institution where they pursued their education. Tinto’s research incorporated data from four different sources: (a) the National Longitudinal Survey of the high school graduating class of 1972, (b) the high school and beyond studies of educational activities of the high school graduating class of 1980, (c) the American College Testing Program survey of institutions, and (d) the 1991 Survey of Retention at Higher

Educational Institutions. Tinto posited that a student's decision to withdraw from his or her course of study and/or institution was dependent on the ability of the institution of higher education to meet the student's needs. Tinto (1993) believed that the lower the degree of the student's social and intellectual integration into various academic and social communities, the higher the likelihood of the student's departure from college.

Continuing his research, Tinto (1997) explored how learning could be enhanced and challenged by using students from the coordinated studies program at Seattle Central Community College in Washington. Tinto believed that the classroom was the center of educational activity for higher education and thus a key to retention. For students who commuted to school and had multiple obligations and responsibilities outside of the institution, the classroom was the only place where they and faculty meet and where formal education was experienced, according to Tinto (1997). He sought to determine the effect of altering classroom experiences through the use of learning communities and the adoption of collaborative learning strategies. His research attempted to explain the role of the classroom, its educational activities, and normative orientations on student learning and resistance. Most previous research showed that learning appeared to be a spectator sport in which faculty talk dominated (Fischer & Grant, 1983). Moreover, student participation in college classrooms was relatively passive (Smith, 1983; Karp & Yoels, 1976; Nunn, 1996).

Tinto (1993) had a more psychological approach when he examined persistence, comparing and contrasting those who stayed and those who left school in terms of personal characteristics. He surmised that there was either something missing or there was a defect associated with those who did not persist in continuing their education. In review, most researchers have explained the lack of persistence and retention in college as the result of

insufficient student integration and involvement in academic and social activities. These researchers found that the greater the students' integration, or involvement in the life of the college, especially its academic life, the greater the chances that they would persist, remaining engaged in their education. (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977). However, adult learners rarely seek to involve themselves with student life activities at the community college. Understanding this fact reveals faculty vital importance in persistence. In fact, it is the one constant of the adult student, and nothing is more important than the amount of contact between faculty and students (Astin, 1993).

Examining persistence from a sociological approach, Braxton, Milem and Sullivan (2000) agreed with most researchers who found that integration and involvement were the most significant factors in student persistence. Their longitudinal study of 718 full-time, first-time, first-year students at a highly selective private research university provided support for the importance of active learning in influencing student persistence, stating that “faculty classroom behaviors play a role in the student departure process” (Braxton et al., 2000, p.3). The researchers (Braxton et al.) said that faculty teaching behaviors and their effects on persistence, social integration and institutional commitment cannot be overstated.

Rendón (2009) took a different approach. She proposed that for nontraditional students, underserved students and students in community colleges, validation may be more important than integration and involvement in a student achieving success and persistence. Rendón defined validation as interactions with students, initiated by faculty and others in the campus community, that engender feelings of self-worth and belief in the students' ability to succeed (p. 426).

Barnett (2011) also departed from the historical perspective that focused on student persistence in terms of student characteristics, academic preparedness, financial challenges or

out-of-class experiences. She sought to understand the faculty role in student-persistence decisions, studying 333 students at Midwest College on how validating their interactions might influence persistence decisions. Like Rendón, Barnett proposed that when students were validated (recognized, respected, and seen as valued), they were more likely to remain in college. Barnett's study included the presence of sub-constructs of faculty-predicted academic integration at a moderate to strong level, with caring instruction as the strongest predictor of persistence. She also espoused that higher levels of faculty validation modestly predicted increases in students' intent to persist. Furthermore, Barnett (2011) found that "(a) validation by faculty significantly predicted a student's sense of academic integration and intent to persist in college; (b) many of the specific items in the study pertaining to faculty validation involved skills that faculty could cultivate; (c) active institutional efforts to increase the validation of students by faculty could contribute to increased student persistence; and (d) graduate schools could provide opportunities for future faculty members to better understand ways to encourage the success and persistence of their students by actively validating them" (p. 216-217).

Demaris and Kritsonis (2008) found little effects of the higher education classroom on student persistence and satisfaction levels. Their research explored how classroom experiences influenced students' persistence, stating that "the classroom must be designed to provide positive experiences through the adoption of various learning strategies" (p. 2). In their review of the literature, they discovered that the classroom played a significant part in student learning and the persistence process. As a result, classroom experience needs to be designed to provide a wide range of experiences, achievable through the use of collaborative learning strategies, according to Demaris and Kritsonis (2008). The Hossler et al. (2008) study of full-time, first-year students at four-year colleges and universities concurred with Demaris and Kritsonis (2008). Hossler et al.



identified a series of institutional practices that support student persistence; foremost among them was the need to develop active learning strategies in the classroom.

In 2007, Bensimon, president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, pointed out that retention literature has focused too strongly on the characteristics and behaviors of students as the impetus behind student departure. She suggested that it was time to investigate the role that institutions and faculty have in the decision of a student to depart (Hossler, Ziskin, Moore & Walhungu, 2008). Interestingly, early studies had been done on this very topic. For example, Nunn (1996) found that classroom traits, specifically a supportive environment, are as important for student persistence as are student and faculty traits. Bean and Metzner (1996) studied nontraditional students, suggesting numerous factors that influence the persistence of this group. Bean and Metzner (1996) found that social interaction was an important consideration but was less important as a predictor of persistence than academic experiences and external considerations such as family responsibilities. Astin (1993) stated that students who were actively involved in their studies and who were also in a shared-learning climate, which was positive and helped them feel connected to the teachers and students, were motivated to persist and showed the highest persistence rates.

The review of the literature dealing with student persistence supports the need to further examine the adult learners' academic experience. Specifically, researchers need to study the importance of performance relative to the teaching modalities of adult educators in the classroom. This study explores the need for faculty to understand what teaching methodologies and classroom practices best meet the needs of adult students in accelerated programs. In doing so, faculty will be better equipped to encourage and help students successfully complete their academic goals.

## **Educational Philosophy**

In the early 1970s and 1980s, educators were questioning what characteristics of adult learners would increase adult learner enrollment in post-secondary education. The focus was on developing educational philosophies to assist faculty to teach adult learners more effectively. Interestingly, many of their ideas were similar and contained the common theme that adult learners come to the classroom with a great deal of experience which can be beneficial to their learning. Another theme that emerged was that adult learners' primary roles and responsibilities exist independent of college.

In the 1980s, these characteristics and the implications for teaching adults came to the forefront. In 1981, Jerold W. Apps, professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, suggested four phases that could be used as guidelines to develop an adult education philosophy. An educational philosophy provides a theoretical framework for a faculty teaching approach.

The four phases of App's philosophy are:

(1) identify beliefs about adult education by asking one's self questions about the learner, the overall purpose of adult education, content or subject matter, and the learning process; 2) search for contradictions in the beliefs; (3) discover where the basis for these beliefs came from and find supporting beliefs; (4) make judgments about the beliefs held (Boone, Gartin, Buckingham, Odell and Lawrence, 2001, p. 527).

Apps used these four phases as the basis for formulating eight teaching principles for teachers working with adults returning to college. Apps advised faculty,

to know the biographies of their students, to use learners' experiences as class content, to integrate theory with practice, to provide a climate conducive to learning, to offer variety in format and technique, to provide feedback, to help learners acquire resources and to be available to learners for out of class contacts (Brookfield, 1986, p. 134).

In 1982, Harold W. Beder and Gordon G. Darenwald, both professors at Rutgers University, investigated whether faculty used a different style when teaching adults. Beder and Darenwald surveyed 173 teachers, using a self-report questionnaire. They found that faculty

reported viewing adult students differently and using more andragogical techniques (Merriam, 2007). From the findings of their research, they posited five principles that could be implemented as a foundation in developing a philosophy of education for those who taught adults. Beder and Darenwald (1982) believed that the educational needs of adult learners were different from non-adult learners and therefore educational opportunities for them should support these differences. The five principles that could help teachers determine the best approach to reach adults in the classroom include: (1) adult education can and should play a major role in improving society; (2) if individuals and ultimately society are to prosper, learning must continue throughout life, (3) adults are capable of learning and should be treated with dignity and respect, (4) all adults should have access to learning the things required for basic functioning in society, and (5) the context of adult education differs substantially from the context of pre-adulthood.

Lorraine M. Zinn, while working in the adult basic education program at Florida State University in the mid-1970s, became concerned with how decisions were made relevant to courses and programs offered to adult learners. Zinn observed that availability, affordability, attractiveness of instructional materials, the popularity of a particular teaching strategy or the stated objectives of a funding agency were primary factors involved in making adult educational decisions. Moreover the focus was largely on course content rather than what teaching methods should be used. Zinn believed that adult educators had the freedom and the responsibility to establish learning objectives, determine the purpose and outcomes of learning activities and conduct and evaluate teaching and learning experiences. However, she questioned whether learning outcomes were connected to the needs of adult learners.

In order to find answers, Zinn focused her doctoral research on the development of a valid and reliable instrument to assist adult educators in identifying a personal teaching

philosophy that best fit the adult student. Zinn (1991) designed the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). It was based on five philosophical tenets as practiced by adult educators, and created to help adult educators determine their philosophy of education as compared to other educators' philosophies. Zinn believed strongly that knowledge of one's educational philosophy serves to assist faculty in delivering content in a manner conducive to adult learning and helps faculty to adapt a teaching philosophy or teaching approach that better assists in teaching adult learners, thus impacting their persistence.

The PAEI consists of 75 statements rated on a seven point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral and 7 = strongly agree. Total scores indicate the individual's view toward the five philosophies of adult education: liberalism, behaviorism, progressivism, humanism, and radicalism. The educator's highest score is the score that most closely describes his or her adult education philosophy. The lowest score is the philosophy that least matches his or her beliefs. For example, a score of 95 to 105 shows that the educator strongly agrees with a particular philosophy, while a score of 15 to 25 indicates that the educator strongly disagrees with that particular philosophy.

Most educators usually have one philosophy that earns a high mark (represented by a score of 75 or higher). Generally, this is the philosophy that the educator most clearly identifies with and uses when teaching. It is important for adult educators to know what their philosophy is and to understand that a mismatch between it and educational objectives can be a significant barrier to learning. It is not uncommon for an educator to have two philosophies with high scores. This is the result of some overlap that exists between philosophies.

Zinn found that more experienced teachers generally have a clearly defined philosophy while less experienced teachers often find their scores are fairly equal among three or more of

the philosophies. This is because less experienced teachers may still be developing their beliefs and values about education and may still be influenced by the beliefs and values held by others.

The PAEI can help teachers who have less experience since it has been found to be a reliable and valid testing instrument for measuring adult educational philosophies, with a reported Cronbach's alpha level of 0.75 (Zinn, 1983). Moreover, it can be administered, scored and interpreted by the assessment taker, helping him or her identify amongst Zinn's five philosophies of education. The five philosophies of adult education include the liberalism, behaviorism, progressivism, humanism, and radicalism philosophies of education, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. *Lorraine M. Zinn's (1991) Philosophies of Adult Education*

<b>Educational Philosophy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Teacher Approach</b>	<b>Learner Expectation</b>
<b>Liberalism</b>	Dialectic, lecture, study groups, contemplation, critical reading and discussion	The "expert" transmitter of knowledge, authoritative	Renaissance person who seeks knowledge rather than just information
<b>Behaviorism</b>	Stimulus-response, behavior modification, competency based, trial-and-error and reinforcement focused	Manager, controller who predicts and directs learning outcomes	Takes an active role in learning, practicing new behavior
<b>Progressivism</b>	Provides learner with practical knowledge and problem-solving skills, pragmatic knowledge	Organizer, who guides learning through experiences that are educative; stimulates, instigates learning process	Focus on learner needs; interests and experiences key elements in learning
<b>Humanism</b>	Experiential learning, individuality, interactive, group tasks and discussions, team teaching and self-directed learning	Facilitator, helper, partner, promotes but does not direct learning	Highly motivated and self-directed, assumes responsibility for learning
<b>Radicalism</b>	Consciousness raising, noncompulsory learning, autonomy, critical thinking and maximum interaction in	Provocateur, suggests but does not determine direction for learning	Equality with teacher in learning, personal autonomy, creates history and culture by

	discussion groups		combining reflection with action
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*Note: Adapted from Elias J. & Merriam S. (1995). Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education.*

While PAEI descriptions distinguish one philosophy from another, they are not meant to pigeonhole the educator into limited ways of teaching. They do help validate educator's beliefs and values as being representative of generally recognized and respected educational philosophies. The primary focus should be on enabling educators to enhance the daily decisions and choices that they face. Zinn (1999) states that,

If the labels and scores further teachers' understanding of educational philosophy and its relevance to teaching, then they are useful; if they get in the way and make people feel as if they are trapped in a box, then the labels and scores are not useful and should be considered relatively unimportant (p. 163).

Zinn argues that regardless of the differences in educational philosophies, all reflect values and beliefs about certain aspects of education identified as the (a) "purpose or goals of education, (b) content or subject matter to be taught or emphasized, (c) methods of instruction and evaluation to be used (d) teacher roles and (e) student and learner role and characteristics" (p. 161). Zinn defines a philosophy of education as a

Comprehensive and interrelated set of values and beliefs as applied to education-including beliefs about the purpose and nature of human life, the role of the individual in society, purposes and goals of education, role(s) of teachers and students, important subject matter and effective teaching approaches (p. 183).

A personal philosophy of education can offer adult educators a wide variety of benefits according to Zinn (1999). These benefits include: (a) providing an integrated and consistent basis for making educational judgments; (b) a framework for asking better questions and for answering questions better; (c) assistance in distinguishing between what is worthwhile and what is more or less important; and (d) an expanded vision and enhanced meaning in one's work and life. Awareness of one's educational philosophy also provides insight into the relationships

between teacher and learner, among learners, subject matter and the world outside of school. It also serves as a basis for mutual understanding and productive relationships among educators.

Zinn (1999) presents a series of reasons why teachers should be encouraged to develop their own personal philosophies of education. These reasons include: (a) it offers them a foundation upon which to base important educational decisions, serving as a reminder why instructors do what they do in terms of how to cover particular content; (b) it helps to determine what teaching methods to use, revealing areas of inconsistencies, and (c) it allows them to share their understanding of how educational philosophy affects education. Zinn also states that personal educational philosophy is not the same as teaching style, even though she believes the two are related. Teaching style is, according to Zinn, a combination of one's educational philosophy and preferred teaching methods, techniques and strategies. Zinn believes that

Educational philosophy is primarily concerned with why teachers do what they do. Educational philosophies are fairly deeply rooted in people's life values and do not change significantly. Teaching methods, techniques and strategies, on the other hand, may change depending on what works best in a particular situation (p. 168).

The work of Zinn and the results produced by the PAEI continue to be important and relevant as educational opportunities available for adults become more accessible and there is continued movement to increase and improve the educational level of adults in the United States. As the number of adult learners increase and the availability of accelerated programs for adults in community colleges improve, a reciprocal rise in the number of educators teaching in these types of programs is certain to occur. As these adult educators seek answers to questions such as how they should teach the adult learner, what they should teach and how they can accomplish program and course student learning outcomes, it would be most advantageous if the answers came from careful thought, based on educational theory and philosophy, and not from habit or following the latest teaching trends. The lack of congruency and inconsistency that occurs from

lack of strategy and understanding of one's educational philosophy often results in poor academic experiences for the adult learners. It also disconnects the adult learner from the learning process.

Galbraith (2004) challenges adult educators to develop an appropriate setting for students, one which allows for full engagement in learning and encourages persistence. To meet this goal, the adult educator must be "constantly evolving and changing, making new assumptions about practice, thinking, learners, educational purpose and selves" (p. 19). Adult educators need to recognize the diversity of adult learners and their styles, and use diverse learning methods to reach as many preferences as possible. Galbraith states that "no universal prescription concerning the most salient style can be made, especially when the multifaceted nature of adult learners is considered" (p. 15). Educators must constantly be evaluating what effect the teaching process is having on students and on their learning.

### **Andragogy**

The philosophical educational theory of andragogy has a long history. Unfortunately, this adult-centered approach has weaved in and out of higher education but never gained mainstream application. Ancient teaching practices have supported the concept of andragogy, as described by Marcia Conner (2004):

The great teachers of ancient times, from Confucius to Plato, didn't pursue such authoritarian techniques. Major differences exist between what we know of the great teachers' styles, yet they all saw learning as a process of active inquiry, not passive reception. Considering this, it is surprising that teacher focused learning later came to dominate formal education.

While it has been known for centuries that adults require a different approach to learning, this avenue has not been adopted as the primary model of delivering education to adult learners. This research does not take on this promotion, but supports the value of andragogical approach to adult education.



Malcolm Knowles (1980) was a key contributor to the adult learner model. He published his critically acclaimed books in the 1970s, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1970) and *The Adult Learner* (1973). In his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, Knowles (1970) adapted the European concept of andragogy.

As a champion of andragogy, Knowles (1980) originally introduced five assumptions of adult learning and later added the sixth assumption of adult learning. The assumptions are as follows:

- (1) assures and reinforces why a subject matter is important to learn,
- (2) has arrived at a self-concept and needs to be seen as capable of self-direction,
- (3) has an accumulation of life experiences that add to the classroom experience,
- (4) readiness to learn depends on need,
- (5) is solution oriented and has practical application, and
- (6) is motivated by intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation.

As an enhancement to their learning, most adults need a practical, real life application of knowledge, as they bring prior knowledge and experience into the classroom. In return, adult students want to be treated with respect and dignity and want to contribute to the facilitation of the classroom experience. Acknowledging these needs, Knowles (1980) indicated that there should be, “a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers” (p. 47). Adults do not perform as well in the lecture/inquisition modality that is utilized in many traditional academic settings.

One of the more challenging issues that educators encounter when working with adult learners is the notion of getting beyond the concept that learning is mere acquisition of new knowledge and information. As community college educators continue to seek ways to improve

academic success through boosting performance, persistence, and retention rates, they will continue to emphasize students' GPAs, course completion and degree attainment rates.

Although these are important concerns and should be placed as a top priority, other needs of the adult learner need to be addressed and should not be ignored.

Unfortunately, educators opposed to the adult-learner model point out that community colleges are viewed as second best compared to four-year colleges and universities. Community colleges have inherited the stigma that they are inferior institutions in comparison to four-year higher education institutions. Townsend and Bragg (2006) indicate,

Unable to deal with such complexity, most researchers judge the value of a community college education through the lenses of the four-year college and university. From this perspective, student outcomes such as persistence, program completion, transfer and post-program employment rise to the surface as of greatest importance. It is on these terms that a substantial body of evidence has accumulated, both lauding the openness and inclusivity of community colleges but also condemning them for inadequate results. Without fully considering the institution's unique and important characteristics, it is easy to cast the community college as a "second best" higher education institution (p. xxi).

These issues give credence to implementing the more traditional teacher-focused approach, as full-time faculty within the community college environment worry that the knowledge level expected for academic success among students transferring to four-year colleges will be jeopardized by the adult-centered model.

Most educators lack knowledge regarding the andragogical model. They are much more comfortable with the pedagogical, or teacher-centered, model. While most postsecondary educators are experts in their discipline, they have received little or no formal training in the art of teaching or exposure to teaching methodologies. Lorraine Zinn (1991) in her book, *Adult Learning Methods*, concurs stating,

When the adult educator engages in the practice of education, certain beliefs about life in general are applied to the practice. These beliefs constitute the basis for a philosophy of education. As with the life philosophy, the philosophy of education may be unrecognized, internally inconsistent, and only partially formulated (p. 40).

She also believes that most educators are not aware of their educational philosophy. Thus, there is likely a mismatch between their educational philosophy, their teaching objectives, and the needs of their students.

In meeting the challenge of creating the optimal educational environment for non-traditional students, those adults older than 24 years of age, several questions come to mind. Can the andragogical model be successfully integrated into the community college classroom environment, particularly into accelerated programs? Can student learning outcomes be enhanced by faculty understanding their own educational philosophy? Is the educator's educational philosophy compatible with the needs of adult learners? Will educators adapt their educational philosophy so that the adult student is more engaged in the learning process? Do adjunct faculty, who have real-world experience, align more with the adult-focused educational philosophy as compared to full-time faculty, who embrace a more theoretical approach to teaching and tend to have less experience in the world?

The adult-centered, or andragogical model attempts to answer these questions, asserting that adult students have an accumulation of life experiences that add to classroom learning, and because of this the adult students want their education to be solution oriented and have practical application so they can take what they learn in the classroom and apply it in the work setting. Research from Durham Technical Community College validates this belief (Egsegian, 2002). A research project conducted on its fire science program analyzed the probability of success of the pedagogical model as opposed to the andragogical educational model. Firefighters taking courses at the college traditionally have not fared well when faculty have used the pedagogical model. However, the researchers discovered that when faculty employed the andragogical

approach to teaching the firefighters, they excelled. Would other career and technical education programs benefit from the student-centered approach? It is certainly a question worth asking.

Stephen D. Brookfield, professor at the University of St. Thomas, in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, has spent many years engaged in research in the field of adult education. Brookfield (1986) defines good adult teaching as having the “ability to set a certain emotional climate, to use learners’ experience as educational resources, to provide plenty of evaluative information to students and to encourage collaboration and participation” (p. 134). Brookfield acknowledges the emotional uncertainty and discomfort felt by adult learners, and believes this is what makes teaching adults such a passionate and emotional activity.

Engaging in a post-secondary learning environment can be a highly emotional time for adult learners as it is a time when many experience great self-doubt about being involved with teachers and other students. As a result, Brookfield (1986) believes that teachers must be process-oriented managers, resource persons and technicians of learning, and that they need to motivate adult learners as well. He states that faculty should support adult learners to “consider alternatives and to encourage them to scrutinize their own values and behaviors, without making this scrutiny too disturbing or personally threatening that the experience becomes a block to learning” (p.134).

Brookfield (1986) strongly believes in the value of developing a personal educational philosophy for those working with adult learners. Brookfield identifies six principles of effective practice associated with the teaching of adults. These principles include, 1) the understanding that adult learning is voluntary, 2) that there must be respect among participants for each other’s worth, 3) that facilitation (learning) needs to be collaborative, 4) that there is the need to foster a sense of critical reflection in adult students, 5) that there is the need to nurture the adult learner,

and 6) that praxis (or practical side) is the heart of effective facilitation (learning). Brookfield's principles are similar to Knowles (1980), since Knowles also is a strong advocate for adult education. Michael W. Galbraith, professor at Marshall University Graduate College, concurs with Brookfield's beliefs, which suggests that this personal educational vision can provide faculty with a sense of stability and direction; reduce feelings of uncertainty for students; protect faculty against political pressures and undesired wishes of institutions that conflict with the educator's viewpoint, and assist faculty in "judging whether or not you are having the influence you wish" (Galbraith, 2004, p. 13).

Galbraith (2004) is a strong advocate for adult education. He views the general conceptual purpose of teaching adults as encouraging the personal growth and development that impact the professional, social and political aspects of learners. His particular research focus centers on effective methods of teaching adults. To become an effective teacher of adult learners, Galbraith believes it "depends on acquiring a balance between an appropriate philosophical vision of teaching and the understanding and implementation of that vision into a practical instructional process and its related elements" (p. 4). However, his research has found that good teaching is a goal that is difficult to achieve because so many teachers of adult learners are expert in their disciplines and the content they teach, but they have little preparation in the instructional process of helping adults learn.

Galbraith (2004) acknowledges that trying to understand adult learners is a complex and demanding process for teachers of adults. However, he believes that understanding adults as learners and gleaning insights about them can improve the teaching quality of faculty and thus increase student persistence and retention rates. Through his research, Galbraith has compiled a list of characteristics reflective of adult learners to assist faculty in creating a classroom

environment that supports learning. Galbraith identifies adult learners as individuals who (a) bring a diversity of prior experiences and preset ideas about what it means to be a learner; (b) engage in educational activities for a number of reasons, which requires educators to understand the motivational and participation patterns; (c) are varied in their physical, social, psychological, ego, moral and learning development directions; (d) have a diversity of learning styles to select and utilize; and (e) find learning highly emotional, and at times experience self-doubt about being in the educational setting with teachers and other learners.

Galbraith (2004) places a great deal of responsibility for learning and for accomplishment of student learning outcomes on the shoulders of faculty. He further defines good teaching of the adult learner as “a balance of understanding one’s self as a teacher and knowing how to develop learning encounters that are meaningful and useful in the promotion of personal and professional growth” (p. 4). Galbraith sees the effective teacher as engaging in many roles within the teaching/learning model, including being a role model, mentor, counselor, content resource person, learning guide, instructional developer and institutional representative.

Galbraith (2004) reports that “whatever kind of teacher, whether organized, caring, practical or creative, it is essential to be authentic and to discover and develop your own teaching style” (p. 6). The development of teaching style is critical to forming a personal teaching foundation as it allows the adult educator to teach adults in a meaningful and constructive manner. To assist in this, Galbraith identifies five major elements required to be an effective teacher of adults. These include the knowledge of principles of practice, of self, of learners, of content and of methods.

The first element is a philosophy that focuses on the diversity and needs of the adult learner to guide the educational encounter. For this to happen, faculty must create an

environment that is stimulating, collaborative, authentic, credible and conducive for adults to learn and experience autonomy as well as to be challenged and to develop critical thinking and reflection skills, empowerment and self-direction.

The second element, knowledge of self, concerns the need for faculty to understand themselves as a teacher. It focuses on the beliefs, values and attitudes they hold in regard to teaching and the learning process. There is also a need for faculty to understand themselves as a human being. It is this combination of understanding themselves as human beings coupled with their beliefs, values and attitudes that form the basis of their philosophy or personal vision for teaching. Galbraith (2004) acknowledges that there is an interrelationship between beliefs, values and attitudes that forms the foundation for teaching philosophy or vision.

Galbraith (2004) also encourages educators to consider a two-pronged element that incorporates knowledge of the adult learners with an understanding of what it means to be an effective teacher of adults. Adult learners come to learn as the result of their own decisions. They need to feel respected and valued while engaged in the educational process. This can be accomplished by facilitation that offers reflection and collaboration in the classroom. Galbraith (2004) states “It is the multifaceted physiological, psychological, sociological and developmental aspects of the adult learner that contributes to and makes for a challenging and enriching educational encounter” (p. 14). Faculty would do well to grasp this concept and let it influence their approach regarding their mode of educational delivery.

Galbraith’s fourth element of educational delivery states that knowledge of course content is an essential part of the development of a faculty teaching style. Faculty need to be concerned not only with the subject matter but also the relevance and application of the material as well as the manner of conveying the information to those participating in the learning experience.

The final method is knowledge of teaching methods themselves. Methodology is important because (a) it assists in the selection of the appropriate strategies for establishing teaching and learning purposes; (b) helps the teacher of adults identify the purpose of the educational encounter; and (c) aids in strengthening knowledge of methods, which also influences teaching styles. This seems to be the foundational piece for the meaningful development of a personal teaching style vital for those teaching adult learners.

Sharan Merriam serves on the faculty in Adult Education at the University of Georgia. Her research and writings have helped shape the field of adult education. Merriam (2004) asserts that the key factor that differentiates adult learning from child learning is the richer life experiences of adults. Merriam (2007) states that “if accumulated life experiences differentiate children from adults, they also differentiate one adult from another” (p. 423).

Life experiences, regardless of the type, serve several functions in regard to adult learning. Adults use their experiences in the formulation of learning activities. Experiences provide mechanisms for reintegrating or transforming meanings and values. Merriam (2004) also notes that the adult learner’s need to make sense out of his/her life is frequently the incentive for faculty to construct learning activities which address students’ concerns. Past learning experiences can influence present learning in a positive manner but can also become obstacles toward learning.

Add the role of adult learner to other roles and responsibilities and the adult student can quickly become overwhelmed. Faculty need to recognize this complex interchange of machinations as they teach adults in the classroom. Learning in adulthood is characterized by an interaction among the duties and responsibilities inherent in the roles that inhabit an adult’s life, including those of worker, spouse, parent, partner and citizen. Merriam (2007) observes that



“the learning that adults do arises from the context of their lives, which is intimately tied to the sociocultural setting in which they live” (p. 428).

Merriam has identified several principles that she believes define adult learning principles that faculty can use to develop strategies that ensure adults do in fact learn. These include the concept that adults learn throughout their lives and that “the negotiations of the transitional stages in the life span are the immediate causes and motives of much of this learning” (Brookfield, 1986, p. 31). Merriam (2007) notes that there is

little doubt that there is a strong link between the motivation to participate in a learning activity and an adult’s experiences. Many of life events and transitions that adults face are peculiar to adulthood and require adjustments. It is these transitions and life events that are likely to result in significant meaningful learning (p. 425).

For this reason it is important for faculty to realize that diverse learning styles help adults learn in different ways at different times and in different situations. Furthermore, adult learners show a preference for their learning activities to be problem centered and to be meaningful for their life experiences. Adult learners want their learning outcomes to be applicable to life situations.

Adult learning can sometimes be enhanced or inhibited by past learning experiences. The stronger the adult learner identifies himself or herself as a learner, the more effective the learning process for him or her will be. Moreover adults exhibit a tendency toward self-directedness in their learning. Faculty need to understand this and encourage the adult learner to persist and complete their degree.

For centuries, adult learners have required a different approach to learning. Yet the andragogical approach has not been adopted as the primary model of delivering education to adult learners. Although educational institutions have made progress in the understanding of the adult education model, ongoing research is essential to ensure that adult learners’ needs are met.

Research would benefit the adult population, and new adult accelerated programs and services must be developed and implemented. Selection of faculty to teach in these specific programs is vital as well. As educators explore ways to find solutions for the challenge of creating an optimal educational environment for nontraditional students, administrators would do well to embrace these findings.

Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) will be used to analyze data gathered from faculty participants. In addition, the tenets of Malcolm Knowles' (1980) assumptions will be used to evaluate data from study participants and data sources. Recognizing that questions still exist and acknowledging that there is an urgent need to find the answers, this study strives to discover insights and perspectives from faculty and students to assist in creating learning environments conducive for the adult student.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

This chapter provides an explanation of the research design used to undertake this study. A logical and systematic process was utilized to establish transparency of the research process and credibility of the research findings. The guiding questions arising from the research purpose served as the impetus in identifying the appropriate research design and methodology. The purpose of the study was to understand how and in what ways the educational philosophies of faculty influence the persistence and graduation rates of adult students in a community college accelerated program. The major components presented include the following: (a) the qualitative paradigm and case study methodology; (b) site and participant selection criteria and protocols; (c) data collection methods; (d) data analysis procedures; (e) study limitations; (f) trustworthiness and validity related to this research; and (g) the researcher as the instrument.

#### **Qualitative Paradigm**

In selecting an appropriate research paradigm, primary consideration must be given to the research topic or purpose and guiding questions. The quantitative paradigm is best utilized for research problems that have a narrow focus and are guided by explanation being framed as deductive; whereas, the qualitative paradigm is most appropriate when the focus of the research is broad using a wide- and deep-angle lens to explore a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is employed for those research topics that are descriptive and more exploratory in nature. Creswell (2008) believes that two factors should be considered in the determination of which approach will best suit the research topic: (a) explanation, which indicates a quantitative design, or (b) exploration, which supports a qualitative design. This research is exploratory because little is known regarding how faculty educational philosophy

influences adult learners in community college accelerated programs; thus a qualitative research approach is deemed appropriate.

Merriam (2009) states that qualitative research is best identified by the following four criteria: (a) the focus is on understanding the process rather than focusing on the outcome or product; (b) the researcher is an essential instrument of data collection and analysis; (c) the process is inductive by building theory gained from observations and understanding; and (d) the product is richly descriptive in the form of participant interviews, field notes and supporting documentation. This study meets Merriam's four criteria by exploring and providing insights of the complexity of how and in what ways the educational philosophy of faculty influences the persistence of adult learners.

Creswell (2007) agrees and further identifies that it is appropriate to use qualitative research when

(a) we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue (b) we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in the study address a problem or issue (c) we want to help explain the mechanisms or linkages in causal theories or models, and lastly (d) we use qualitative research when existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are examining (p. 40).

The narrow lens of quantitative research, which focuses on outcomes and numbers, cannot effectively articulate the understanding and complexity of a socially constructed phenomenon. As the goal of this research is complex, requiring a wide- and deep-angle lens capable of discovering rich, thick data, this research was clearly in the qualitative paradigm.

Merriam (2002) states, "the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (p. 3). Qualitative research collects data (perceptions, observations and, documents) in a natural setting where the issue or problem is under study with no manipulations of variables by the researcher.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) concur, “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). This study seeks to gather information from faculty regarding their educational philosophy and from students regarding their perceptions of the accelerated adult program. Their perceptions, feelings and thoughts surrounding this unique program were socially constructed in light of their interaction with each other, the program, and the classroom.

This study is also situated in the interpretive paradigm. Willis (2007) explains, “The purpose of interpretive [qualitative] research is not the discovery of universal laws but rather the understanding of a particular situation.” A characteristic of interpretive qualitative research is “to understand a particular context” of a phenomenon (p. 189).

Interpretive qualitative research is constructed through a multiple-layered lens of the people involved in the phenomenon being studied. The interpretive researcher views the world as socially constructed where there are multiple realities forming an interconnected whole.

Creswell (2007) identifies interpretive qualitative research as

an approach to qualitative research that has become interwoven into the core characteristics of qualitative research. It recognizes the self-reflective nature of qualitative research and emphasizes the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents information (p. 248).

The researcher has the responsibility to gather and analyze the data as well as interpret the findings. Therefore, the interpretation of the findings reflects both the experience and background of the participants and the experience and background of the researcher.

Clearly, the qualitative paradigm is best suited to guide this research. The research purpose focuses on an issue to be explored of which little is known. The collection of the data is naturalistic in nature seeking to explore the socially constructed phenomena under study.

Finally, this study of faculty’s educational philosophy and how it influences the retention and

persistence of adult learners may reveal further understanding of the needs of adult learners in accelerated programs in a community college environment.

### **Case Study Methodology**

Case study methodology is often used in program evaluation in order to understand or depict a student's experiences in a program. This study employed a case study methodology to gain an understanding of processes within the accelerated adult program from the participants' perspectives. The use of a case study methodology is often the preferred strategy when how, what or why questions are being posed and when the researcher has little or no control over events. Case study methodology is especially appropriate when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context and when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

According to Merriam (1998), the most defining characteristic of a case study "lies in delimiting the object of the study, the case" (p. 27). She further indicates that it is this bounding of the situation, phenomenon, or instance which creates the case. This research was bounded by faculty participants and adult learners in an accelerated adult program within a single community college.

Yin (2009) defines case study in terms of a process. "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 13). However, Merriam (1988) describes the essence of a case study in terms of the end product and defines a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21).

Stake (1995) infers that a case study approach is appropriate when the research needs to capture and understand the complexity of a situation. To bring clarity to the types of case studies, Stake identified types of cases:

1. Intrinsic –geared at understanding a particular case because the case itself is of great interest,
2. Instrumental – targeted at providing insight into a particular issue or concern or to refine a theory,
3. Collective – a number of cases are jointly studied in order to understand a phenomenon, population or general situation.

This study incorporates components of intrinsic and instrumental case methodology since the research focused on a single case issue bounded by the selected faculty and adult learners' perspective in an accelerated adult program at one Illinois community college. According to Stake (1995), "An intrinsic case study is best utilized when we are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case" (p. 3). Instrumental case studies focus on the general understanding of a research situation and look to the end product in terms of rich, thick description of the phenomenon being investigated.

Yin (2003) codifies three conditions to determine the appropriate research case study method. He states, "The three conditions consist of (a) the type of question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events" (p. 5). This research study used a single case study methodology bounded by the purpose and the location of a single community college in Illinois. Additionally, this research used a descriptive study approach to gain insights and

perspectives of adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs and faculty expectations of these adult learners.

The case study approach can involve a single case or event or multiple cases. A single case approach typically allows for a more extensive data collection using multiple data sources and permits a more in-depth analysis. Therefore, a single case study methodology was deemed appropriate for this study.

### **Case Selection**

The design of the research, which used a case study methodology with an interpretive paradigm, directed the selection of the participants and sites. This study used an exploratory qualitative research design to discover how and in what ways the influences of faculty philosophy have on the retention and graduation of adult students enrolled in accelerated programs. Therefore, to gain the most relevant data, purposeful sampling was the most appropriate method to elicit information from those participants most relevant to this research.

Purposeful sampling is a non-random method of sampling where information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. Creswell (2007) states that purposeful sampling "means that the [researcher] selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon to be studied" (p. 125). Merriam (1998) concurs and states, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Purposeful sampling was the initial sampling strategy employed for this study to identify the two groups of participants and the site. The first participant group was faculty who had taught in the adult Fast Track program at Public Community College (PCC)



between 2007 and 2009 programs in three Associates in Applied Science Degrees: Management, Marketing, and Computer Information Systems. Additional criteria specific to faculty was utilized to further narrow the selection of faculty participants with attributes crucial to the inquiry. The second participant group was adult students who were enrolled in the adult accelerated Fast Track program at PCC between 2007 and 2009 in these three Associates in Applied Science Degrees.

Maximum variation sampling was utilized as a complementary secondary sampling strategy to further narrow participant selection to attain a more complete understanding of the phenomena of how the educational philosophies of faculty influence the retention and completion of adult learners in accelerated programs. Maximum variation sampling served to facilitate the selection of a variety of faculty and student participants in order to obtain multiple perspectives. The inclusion of this type of sampling, also known as maximum diversity samplings strengthens the transferability of the research findings. According to Creswell (2007),

[Maximum variation sampling] consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiates the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different in the criteria. This approach is often selected because when a researcher maximizes differences at the beginning of the study, it increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives –an ideal in qualitative research (p. 126).

Maximum variation sampling was used to identify faculty whose philosophy was classified as one of Zinn's (1991) five educational philosophies: liberalism, behaviorism, progressivism, humanism and radicalism. Incorporation of maximum variation sampling aimed to capture the diversity of a phenomenon to be studied within a small heterogeneous sample. Having each educational philosophy represented increased the range of insights and perspectives from study participants.

Additionally, maximum variation sampling enabled the identification of two distinct student groups: those adult students who graduated (completers) and those who did not. The inclusion of these two distinctive student groups produced information-rich participants who are central to the purpose of the inquiry.

### **Site Selection**

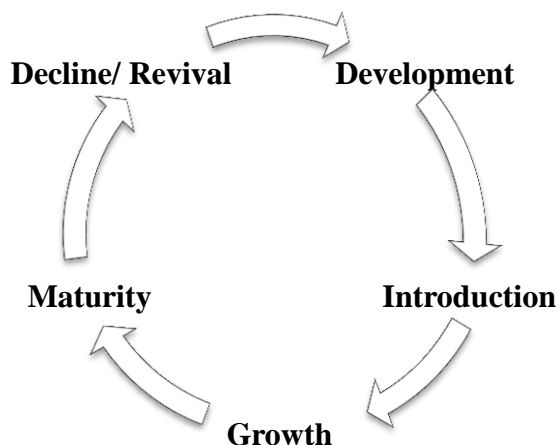
In determining the appropriate site selection for this study, the primary purposeful criterion was the maturity and sustained growth of an adult accelerated program. The critical criterion which focused on program maturity was essential for this study. Mature educational programs have transitioned from a beginning trial and error stage, moved through the more settled competent period and resulted in a specific proficiency level. The selection of a mature site as the case for this study allowed for a concerted focus on a stable adult accelerated program rather than on a program progressing through its start-up or going through “growing pains”

According to Robert E. Quinn and Kim Cameron (1983), authors of *Organizational Life Cycles and Some Shifting Criteria of Effectiveness*, a common theory in organizational development is that all programs go through a life cycle of development, introduction, growth and maturity and eventually decline. These stages are:

1. development: (research and conceptualization stage);
2. introduction: (initial introduction stage);
3. growth: (continual developing stage);
4. maturity: (products offer and acquire a solid share of the market); and
5. decline or revival: (sustainability of the program through innovative programming, or decline if no improved services/programs).

Figure 1 represents the different stages that a program goes through during the life cycle.

Figure 1. *Organizational Life Cycle*



Note: Adapted from “Robert E. Quinn and Kim Cameron (1983), *Organizational Life Cycles and Some Shifting Criteria of Effectiveness*.

The determination of a mature adult accelerated program at Illinois community colleges was based on the following criteria:

- (a) Establishment of a designated adult accelerated program offering degrees and certificates;
- (b) Dedicated administrator and staff responsible for the adult accelerated program;
- (c) Designated department with support services for the adult accelerated program;
- (d) Offering the adult accelerated program for more than three years; and
- (e) Over 200 students enrolled annually (unduplicated head count) in the adult accelerated program.

Illinois has a total of 38 single campus community colleges and two multi-campus community college systems. The two multi-campus community college systems were not eligible for the site selection due to the complexity of the administrative system. Within a multi-campus community college system, often the system’s primary administrative office makes program decisions which in turn are implemented by each college campus. The focus of this

study is on colleges that have authority over their own decisions related to accelerated programs, faculty and their adult students.

A thorough review of the 38 remaining single campus Illinois community colleges using the mature adult accelerated program criteria was completed. Of the 38 single campus Illinois community colleges, 21 community colleges did not offer a designated adult accelerated program. Of the 17 remaining community colleges, all were contacted to determine if their adult accelerated program met the established criteria for site selection. As a result, only one college met all the criteria and was used as the case study site. Also a pseudonym for the single site was used to identify the college, Public Community College (PCC). Table 3 describes how the site, designated as Public Community College (PCC), met the selection criteria.

Table 3. *Public Community College and Site Selection Criteria*

Selection Criteria	Site Description
Established an Adult Accelerated Program	Four adult accelerated degrees: 1) Associate in Arts 2) Associates of Applied Science Degree in Management 3) Associates of Applied Science Degree in Marketing 4) Associates of Applied Science Degree in Computer Information System
Administrator and Staff Dedicated to Serving the Adult Accelerated Program	Dedicated administrative position (Director of Adult Learning), three full-time staff and three part-time staff
Designated Department with Support Services	The Professional Advancement and Learner Center
Offered Adult Accelerated Degree Program for More Than Three Years	Offered adult accelerated degree program for seven years (started 2004)
Over 200 Unduplicated Adult Learners Enrolled Annually	Over 200 adult learners (unduplicated) annually

## **Public Community College**

Use of a single site was deemed appropriate for this research because it met all the selection criteria for determination of a mature adult accelerated program in a single campus Illinois community college. Although there has been a surge in the number of adults entering accelerated academic programs at community colleges over the last few years, there has not been a similar increase in the number of adult learners who complete their degrees. The challenge for educators is to create tailored programs situated within an environment conducive to the adult learner. One way community colleges offer returning adults educational opportunities, crafted specifically for them, is by the establishment of Adult Learning Centers. Public Community College established such a center. The mission of this Center was to be the central point for recommending, providing, and overseeing the general function of services and needs of adult students by understanding economic trends and conditions, and identifying and creating career-focused programs to prepare adults for a global marketplace. Since 2004, the Center has offered the adult accelerated program (designated generically as the Fast Track program) specifically for adults 24 years and older who are committed to continuing their education.

Currently, the Fast Track offerings include an Associate of Arts degree (AA), Associate in Applied Science Degrees (AAS) in Management, Marketing and Computer Information Systems. Of the four degree programs, only the Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Management, Marketing and Computer Information Systems were utilized for this study. These three applied degrees have been offered since 2004 and were selected because they prepare adult learners for marketable employment, job promotion opportunities or career transition back into the marketplace.

During the three year time frame designated for this study, 950 unduplicated adult learners were enrolled, of which over 700 were enrolled in the three Associate of Applied Science Degrees of Management, Marketing and Computer Information Systems. Thus, the total adult students enrolled in the three Applied Science degree programs attracted 78% of the students enrolled in the Fast Track program, providing a substantial database for this study. Table 4 indicates the number of adult learners attending the three adult accelerated degrees.

Table 4. *Enrollment Numbers in the Adult Fast Track Degrees from 2007 – 2009*

Academic Year	AA and All Three AAS Degrees Unduplicated Head Count	All Three AAS Degrees Unduplicated Head Count
2007	271	271
2008	301	249
2009	391	199
Total	963	791

While the degrees being offered in the Fast Track program were intensive and rigorous, they were seen as manageable for adult learners. The goal of the Fast Track program was to address the educational needs of adult students by developing and providing engaging, relevant and accelerated degrees designed to facilitate retention and degree completion. This study shares insights surrounding the influence of faculty educational philosophy on these adult students.

### **Participant Selection**

Three groups of participants were required to address the purpose of this study. One group was the faculty teaching in any of the three Associates of Applied Science Fast Track degrees and two groups of students, those that graduated and those that did not complete the degree requirements.

### **Faculty Participant Selection**

Faculty who had taught any course or courses in 2007, 2008 or 2009 in the three Fast Track Associates of Applied Science Degrees (Management, Marketing and Computer Information Systems) were eligible for this study. The years 2007, 2008 and 2009 were used in the selection criteria for the following reasons: (a) the program began in 2004, and 2007 was the first year for degree completers; (b) beginning in 2007, the Fast Track program at Public Community College had an available comprehensive and complete database of faculty; and (c) the data was current and timely for the research. Names of the potential faculty participants were obtained from the Fast Track faculty database. The PCC Fast Track program does not employ full time faculty; all faculty are commonly identified as “adjunct faculty”. The adjunct faculty consists of two groups: (a) those employed full-time at PCC, and (b) those that are part-time PCC employees (traditional adjunct faculty). All Fast Track adjunct faculty are master’s degree prepared and can teach in the degrees for which they are qualified.

Teaching assignments in the Fast Track program for full-time faculty employed by PCC are self-selected by the faculty and approved by the Divisional Dean or Chair. Adjunct faculty who are not employed full-time at PCC, are assigned teaching assignments in the Fast Track program based on course offerings and availability. Fall and spring terms at PCC are 16 weeks in length. Full-time PCC faculty can teach up to four Fast Track courses per term and the adjunct faculty can teach three courses per term.

### **Student Participant Selection**

Adult students enrolled in one of the three Fast Track Associates of Applied Science Degrees (Management, Marketing and Computer Information Systems) in 2007, 2008, and 2009 were eligible. The years 2007, 2008 and 2009 were used in the selection criteria for the

following reasons: (a) the program began in 2004, and 2007 was the first year for degree completers; (b) beginning in 2007, the Fast Track program at Public Community College had an available comprehensive and complete database of faculty; and (c) the data was current and timely for the research. Two distinct student groups were identified as essential for the study: those adult students who graduated (completers) and those who did not graduate. Eligible student names were obtained from the Fast Track database. Potential student participants, identified as degree completers, numbered 281 while 510 students were identified as those students who did not successfully complete their associate degree requirements.

### **Participant Contact Protocol**

A contact protocol was established to ensure consistency of the research's multiphase data collection process. Yin (2003) states that "protocol is a major way of increasing the reliability of case study research and is intended to guide the investigator in carrying out the data collection from a single-case study" (p. 67). Furthermore, Yin believes that by establishing a participant protocol, this sequence or protocol helps to identify and alleviate potential problems and enhances the trustworthiness of the study. The following sequence was utilized as a contact protocol for the faculty and student participants.

### **Faculty Contact Protocol**

All eligible faculty participants were initially contacted via an introductory email in which the study's purpose was described and what their participation would entail. Each faculty participant was provided a web address and link to the online version of Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) and the demographic survey. Faculty were instructed to first complete Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) followed by the demographic survey. This order was required to document the results of their Zinn's



Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) on the demographic survey. Additionally, the demographic survey requested faculty volunteers to take part in a focus group.

From those respondents who agreed to participate in the focus group, names were placed into a pool of potential participants. Final selection for the ten member faculty focus group was based on the following criteria: (a) taught at least two years in the Fast Track program, (b) taught in any of the three AAS degrees, and (c) employed as full-time PCC faculty or adjunct faculty currently employed in the field, and (d) a cross-sectional representation of Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). Of Zinn's five educational philosophies, (liberalism, behaviorism, progressivism, humanism and radicalism), great care was undertaken to have representation (two people) from each philosophy in the faculty focus group. Focus group members were randomly selected from the appropriate pool of faculty participants.

### **Student Contact Protocol**

Students were initially contacted via an introductory email in which the study's purpose was described and what their participation would entail. Students from the two groups were invited to complete a demographic survey which included a request for volunteers to participate in a focus group. Those respondents who completed the student demographic survey and indicated their interest in participating in a student focus group were placed into the appropriate pool of potential participants. Students were divided into the ten to twelve member focus groups and randomly selected from the appropriate pool of student participants.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Data collection methods utilized to gather the information relevant to the purpose of the study were Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI), demographic survey, focus groups, and field notes. In general, the focus of qualitative data collection methods is the

explanation, description or exploration of behaviors or events. Merriam (1998) describes qualitative data collection in terms of words. Patton (1990) agrees and views data collection within a qualitative design primarily of methods to garner “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (p. 10). The data collection methods utilized in this study provided the participants an opportunity to share their perspectives.

A sequential data collection approach was used only for the faculty participants. This sequence was as follows: (1) all faculty first complete the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory Instrument (PAEI); (2) these faculty then complete the demographic survey which requests their educational philosophy gleaned from the PAEI; and (3) from this group, specific criteria was used to select focus group participants.

### **Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI)**

All faculty participants were instructed to complete Zinn’s (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (Appendix H). Awareness of one’s educational philosophy is helpful to the understanding of one’s actual practice in the classroom. Each faculty participant was provided a link to the online version of Zinn’s Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). Faculty were asked to first complete Zinn’s Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory followed by the online demographic survey. This sequence is required in order to allow faculty to identify their educational philosophy gleaned from the PAEI on the demographic survey as well as indicating their willingness to participate in a focus group.

The Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) was developed by Lorraine Zinn (1991) as an instrument to identify adult educators’ personal philosophy of education. The PAEI was designed only to provide information about faculty’s own belief of their educational philosophy, not to make judgments about those beliefs. These educational philosophies, as

described by Zinn, serve as the framework to provide information about faculty's own understanding and belief of their educational philosophy. The five educational philosophies espoused by Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory include the following: liberalism, behaviorism, progressivism, humanism and radicalism. Careful consideration was taken to have representation from all five educational philosophies in the focus group in order to provide an opportunity for the sharing of multiple perspectives. Approval to use the PAEI was obtained from the author and the publisher.

### **Demographic Surveys**

All participants, faculty and students, were asked to complete a demographic survey. The demographic survey for faculty is found in Appendix F. Student demographic data was separated into two distinct groups: (a) those students who completed the degree requirements and (b) those students who did not complete the degree requirements. The demographic survey for students is found in Appendix G. These demographic surveys were conducted using the online tool, SurveyMonkey, for the convenience for participants and for ease of data collection and analysis. Obtaining demographic information regarding both groups assisted with the contextualizing of the research findings.

### **Focus Groups**

Three focus groups facilitated the data collection relevant to this study. Participants included the following groups: (a) faculty who taught in the Fast Track accelerated program at the case study site, (b) adult learners who completed their associate degree requirements, and (c) adult learners who did not successfully complete their associate degree requirements. Focus group sessions for the three groups were one hour in length and held in the Center at the case study site. For this research, the faculty focus group consisted of ten faculty participants, taking

special care to provide representation of the five educational philosophies, and the two student focus groups which also consisted of ten participants in each group.

Focus groups are interviews with a group of individuals who have extensive knowledge in the topic that is being discussed (Krueger, 2008; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2006).

According to Merriam (2009), “Focus groups are to be used when this is the best way to get the best data that addresses your research question” (p. 95). Patton (2002) succinctly explains the concept of focus groups,

Unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group participants get to hear each other’s responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what others have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (p. 386).

A strength of focus groups comes from the fact that its inception is based on the researcher’s focus and that stimulates the production of data relevant to the study. On the other hand, because the researcher creates and manages the group it is a more contrived experience than participant observation (Curtis & Redmond, 2007).

The size of the focus group impacts the quality of the response in a focus group. There are no strict rules on the number of participants that need to be included in a focus group but “most writers suggest somewhere between six and ten participants, preferably people who are strangers to each other” (Merriam, 2009, p. 94). Philips and Stawarski (2008) concur stating that “there is no magic group size but the group needs to be large enough to ensure different points of view but small enough to provide chances for each participant to freely exchange and comment” (p. 27). There is considerable agreement that between six and twelve participants is the range that lends itself to being a well-designed group (Baumgarnter, Strong, & Hensley, 2002; Bernard, 1995; Johnston & Christensen, 2004; Krueger, 1988, 1994, 2000; Morgan, 1997;

Marrelli, 2008). Kruger (1994) even suggests the use of very small groups, groups he calls “mini-groups” (p.17), are useful when participants have very specialized knowledge and experiences to share in the group. In these cases, the focus groups could be as small as three or four participants (Kruger, 1994; Morgan, 1997).

In most research studies, focus groups consist of a range of 6 to 12 people. The rationale for this range comes from the belief that focus groups should be large enough in order for a significant number of participants to produce diversity in the information provided but not so large as to stifle dialog, prohibit interaction and thus create an uncomfortable environment. The goal is to keep the focus group small enough to make the setting inviting for individuals to share their thoughts, ideas and opinions. Focus groups that are too large can become unmanageable for the facilitator and focus groups that are too small can fail to produce the rich data necessary for the research.

The communication process in the focus group is essential for success. According to Creswell, (2007) communication in a focus group is enhanced when the participants are similar and cooperative with each other. Questions to elicit information need to be worded in such a manner that they are not confusing and can be easily understood by all participants. According to Yin, (2003) interview questions for focus groups should be “open-ended and assume a conversational manner” (p.106). Just as asking the right question leads to rich, thick data, asking the wrong kind of question can impair the quality of the conversation, thus affecting the research results. Patton (2002) argues and does not encourage the facilitator to ask why questions because they can lead to dead-end responses from participants.

Patton (2002) recommends six types of questions to stimulate the conversation in order to get the best data that addresses the research question. These questions include, (1) behavioral

based questions; (2) opinion and value based questions; (3) feeling questions; (4) knowledge questions; (5) sensory questions, and (6) background and demographic questions. In this study, semi-structured questions were utilized which focused on participants' opinions and values regarding how the educational philosophy of faculty had influenced the retention and graduation of adult learners in an accelerated program.

There is considerable discussion regarding the advantages and disadvantages of focus groups as a research methodology. It is a technique that is often viewed as a fast, effective and economical manner to collect data from multiple participants in a short period of time. In comparison to other data collection techniques, focus groups allow individuals to explore and clarify their positions on discussed topics. The focus group environment creates a unique atmosphere because of its social orientation that encourages the sense of belonging to a group, which makes participants feel more secure in sharing experiences and thoughts (Krueger, 2000). A synergy occurs which can lead to richer dialog than results with the use of one-to-one interviewing. Interactions between participants can also produce valuable data as the result of spontaneous responses (Krueger, 2000). Marrelli (2008) states that focus groups are “an intentionally iterative process in which ideas develop and change as participants add to the conversation and refine or challenge what others say” (p. 42).

The goal of the focus group is not only to obtain detailed and in-depth knowledge but also to have the participants' comments stimulate and build on each other's thinking. Creative new ideas and perspectives and insightful beliefs and suggestions often emerge and a very different understanding of a problem can emerge that any one individual might not have considered. These groups are useful in providing qualitative data about feelings, attitudes, perceptions or ideas (Marrelli, 2008).

One of the major advantages of a focus group is that participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments that can feed off of the original responses as they hear what others have to say. A synergy can happen with focus groups that can lead to a richer dialog than with just interviewing with one person at a time.

The disadvantage of focus group sessions is that it can be difficult to manage the participants in the focus group session. One risk associated with focus groups is the concern that one or more vocal group members might dominate the discussion and exclude the input of more quiet and timid participants. This type of situation could cause the data to inaccurately represent the group as a whole and not just a handful of participants (Goodwin & Happell, 2009). This type of situation might also create a "group think" where thinking focuses on only one perspective (Krueger, 1998; Marrelli, 2008). However, dominant members can also make their fellow group members participate more freely because they have been open in their discussions and expression of their opinions (Kitzinger, 1994).

Focus groups can be difficult to schedule and organize because of the physical requirement of a group of individuals to be in the same place at the same time (Marrelli, 2008). A large amount of data can be generated by the focus group and this can be labor intensive and difficult to analyze (Krueger, 1998; Curtis & Redmond, 2007). Additionally, the analytical ability and depth of experience of the group members can influence the quality of the data (Marrelli, 2008).

Another concern with the use of focus groups revolves around the facilitator or moderator who must be highly skilled so as to maintain a high quality discussion and to make sure a comfortable environment that is characterized by high trust is created for the participants. The role of the facilitator is a difficult but a crucial one. According to Curtis and Redmond (2007)

the facilitator's role is to ask questions, elicit responses and encourage discussion within the group. A high level of expertise in group facilitation is required to run a productive focus group. The facilitator needs to quickly build rapport with the group, safeguard the timeliness of the session, keep on track with the prescribed questions and focus on target while challenging the participants' exchanges and facilitating the discussion. The rapport created by the facilitator with the group members is an asset to this methodology as it stimulates participants to contribute more and with deeper information than in individual data collection methods (Marelli, 2008).

The task of the facilitator, or moderator, is to facilitate and focus discussion on the topic of interest while ensuring that participants have the opportunity to contribute fully to developing the discussion (Freeman, 2006). One challenge facing focus group facilitators is the need to encourage participants to become involved in the interactive and open discussion and to avoid a situation where only the more confident and vocal participants are engaged in dialogue. In this situation, the facilitator must work to make sure all group members feel at ease and confident enough to speak while not losing the interest of the more vocal members. In well-run focus groups, after the initial prompts, the conversation should take off on its own course, with limited intrusion by the facilitator who is using a carefully designed topic guide. The facilitator should not feel tempted to join into the discussion (Peterson & Barron, 2007).

Additionally, the facilitator is charged with creating a safe and confidential environment that will promote self-disclosure and in which group members are encouraged to question each other's responses, request clarification and explore exceptions to responses (Freeman, 2006). This is accomplished in part by the facilitator's careful participant selection, sensitive questioning and the establishment of clear ground rules for participation (Krueger 1994).



It is generally agreed that the facilitator needs to have an assistant facilitator or assistant moderator (Krueger, 2000; Marrelli, 2008). An assistant facilitator was employed for all three focus group sessions. The assistant facilitator's responsibilities included setting up the focus group room, operating the audio recording equipment for each session and helping to create a welcoming environment supportive of the group discussions.

### **Field Notes**

Field notes, which were observational (descriptive) and reflective, were utilized as part of the systematic data collection process (Cresswell, 2008). Observational field notes are detailed and provide descriptions of the setting, activities and behaviors of the participants. Reflective field notes contain the researcher's feelings, reactions, and interpretations. According to Merriam (2009), field notes should be "highly descriptive" and should capture those details that make the reader feel as they were present at the field visit (p. 130). This assists in providing insight and interpretation as well as it begins the process of data analysis.

Patton (2002) asserts that field notes include four basic elements. First and foremost, field notes should be descriptive by providing information as to the setting, the participants who were involved, the interaction that occurred and any reflective information that "will permit you to return to an observation during analysis and eventually permit the reader of the study's findings to experience the activity observed in your report" (p. 302). Secondly, field notes should provide direct quotes, reactions and any observed activities or reactions captured formally or informally during the focus group discussion. Thirdly, field notes should provide a reflective nature of the reactions to the experience as well as provide any observable significance from what has been observed. Lastly, field notes should provide, "insights, interpretations, beginning

analyses, working hypotheses about what is happening in the setting and what it means” (Patton, 2002, p. 306).

After the focus group sessions, field notes were written documenting the behaviors, actions, and impressions of the participants and the sessions. Reflective field notes, in particular, were used to keep the focus of the data collection on the study participants and not the knowledge and perception of the researcher. To enhance the internal validity and to provide an audit trail of the research, field notes were used to triangulate the focus group transcripts. The data source, data collection method and data collection technique for faculty participants is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5. *Data Sources Employed of Faculty Participants for the Study*

Data source	Method	Data collection technique
Demographic Data	Pre-focus Group Demographic Survey of Faculty	Used on-line survey tool, SurveyMonkey.com, which provided faculty demographic data
Faculty Educational Philosophy	Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI)	Used the on-line Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) created by Lorraine Zinn (1991)
Faculty Expectations and Recommendations of Teaching Strategies in the Adult Accelerated Programs	Focus Group Session	Conducted a one hour focus group session with faculty who taught in the Fast Track accelerated program at the case study site between academic years 2007 and 2009
Participant Observation	Researcher Field Notes	Researcher wrote field notes directly after conducting the faculty focus group

The data source, data collection method and data collection technique for student participants is depicted in Table 6.

Table 6. *Data Sources Employed of Student Participants for the Study*

Data source	Method	Data Collection Technique
Demographic Data	Pre-focus Group Demographic Survey of Students	Used on-line tool, SurveyMonkey.com, which provided student demographic data
Students Who Graduated Expectations of Teaching Strategies in the Adult Accelerated Programs	Focus Group Session	Conducted a one hour focus group session with students who graduated from the Fast Track accelerated program between academic years 2007 and 2009
Non-graduate Student Recommendations on How Educational Philosophies Could Influence the Persistence of Adult Learners	Focus Group Session	Conducted a one hour focus group session with students who did not graduate from the Fast Track accelerated program between 2007 and 2009
Participant observation	Researcher Field Notes	Researcher wrote field notes directly after conducting both the non-graduate and graduate student focus groups

### **Ethical Considerations**

Measures were employed during the planning and conducting of the research to make sure that ethical concerns and considerations were addressed. Johnson and Christensen (2004) define three areas of ethical issues that impact research. The first is the relationship between society and science because social concerns and cultural values usually direct the course of research. Secondly, professional issues, which involves research misconduct and fraudulent activity such as falsifying research results or even just reviewing research. The third area concerns the treatment of participants and ensuring that the participants are informed, not harmed physically or psychologically during the research and are ethically treated. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) also emphasize the importance of informed consent and the protection of subjects from

harm. They believe that these two areas are highly significant when considering ethics in qualitative research.

In addition, Cornett and Chase (1990) state that trust is the foundation of an ethical study. They assert that the degree to which a study is ethical or unethical should not rest solely within an abstract set of ethics or even an ethics checklist. It should be determined by the result of the process of continuous interaction between the researcher and the participant. This process must be based on an element of trust which is cultivated through two-way communication and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality.

National-Louis University's (NLU) Institutional Research Review Board (IRRB) reviewed all relevant documents and granted approval for the study. Throughout the study, all ethical guidelines established by the NLU Institutional Research Review Board (IRRB) for student research were followed. All the faculty participants signed a consent form (Appendix A) prior to completing Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) and the demographic survey. Those faculty participating in the focus group signed a second consent form (Appendix A) explicitly for the focus group. Students followed the same procedure of signing a consent form (Appendix B) prior to completing the demographic survey and for those participating in a focus group, signing a second consent form (Appendix B) expressly for the focus group. Participants signed two copies of each consent form, providing a copy which they could keep and a copy for the research documentation. A professional transcriptionist was used to transcribe the audio tapes and therefore signed a confidentiality form (Appendix I).

Great care was taken in the storage of the research documents. All documents including field notes, audio files, demographic surveys and transcripts were kept securely stored with only the researcher having access. After five years, all research documents will be destroyed.

### **Data Collection Pilot**

A pilot study was conducted prior to the data collection process. This was done in order to alleviate, as much as possible, any potential problems associated with the data collection methods used and to verify the understanding of the focus group interview questions. Three faculty that had experience teaching adult learners in an accelerated format were provided a link to the online version of Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). They were asked to follow the data collection sequence by first completing the Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory followed by the online demographic survey. Afterwards, they participated in the pilot faculty focus group.

The purpose of the pilot focus groups was to elicit information that would ensure the focus group interview questions could be easily understood by participants and to ensure that these questions would provide the data needed to address the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the pilot focus groups provided the opportunity for the facilitator to gain a higher level of expertise in group facilitation for a productive focus group (i.e., building rapport within the group, safeguarding the timeliness of the session, practicing with the digital recording equipment, and fostering a high level of participant exchange).

A similar pilot focus group process was completed with students. Three students who had taken classes in an accelerated format were invited to participate in the student focus groups. They were asked to complete the online demographic survey and then to participate in the pilot focus group.

Every provision was taken to ensure that those individuals in the pilot groups replicated each step of the data collection process. All pilot focus sessions were digitally recorded. The

digital files were erased and none of the data or information ascertained from the pilot was included in the findings of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Each qualitative study is unique in design and therefore, requires tailored strategies for the highly integrated research components of data collection and analysis. Merriam (2009) views these components as more than integrated, she believes that data collection and analysis are “simultaneous activities in qualitative research” (p. 165). Qualitative research garners a large amount of contextual data in multiple forms. The key to qualitative analysis is to make sense of data and find meaning from the documents, observations, and field notes. Data should be evaluated on a continuous basis in order to discover themes and patterns that provide an explanation of the phenomena being studied.

To assist with consistent and systematic data analysis, Creswell (2007) offers a framework. He describes the analysis process as a spiral process rather than a linear process, which is more encompassing and involves making sense of the research data. Creswell describes the stages of the framework as the following: (a) data managing; (b) reading and memoing; (c) classifying and interpreting; and (d) representing and visualizing. The data analysis phase of the study followed the framework described by Creswell (2007).

### **Data Managing Stage**

All digital audio recordings from the focus groups, data from the demographic surveys and results from the Philosophy of Adult Educational Inventory were organized by faculty and student status. Student data was also organized according to those students who completed a degree in an adult accelerated modality and those students who did not. All documents were color-coded and placed in secured file cabinets and were secured on two separate flash drives.

All other documents such as field notes were transcribed from hand written notes. The key was to maintain clean and clear copies of the data in a manner that was easily retrievable for data analysis.

### **Reading and Memoing Stage**

Multiple readings of all surveys, documents, field notes and transcripts were initially completed. Transcripts were reviewed along with the field notes; memos and annotations during this iterative process were created, assisting with the analysis of the data. To enhance the internal validity and to provide an audit trail of the research, the following triangulation strategies were utilized for faculty: (a) triangulation of data obtained from the focus group questions, (b) results of the Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory and (c) field notes were used to triangulate the focus group transcripts. The following triangulation strategies were utilized for the students: (a) triangulation of data obtained from the focus group questions, (b) graduation and withdrawal data obtained from the Banner database and demographic survey, and (c) field notes obtained from the focus group transcripts.

### **Describing, Classifying, and Interpreting Stage**

Theming is a concept of highlighting the perception and experiences of the research participants as related to the research purpose and driving questions. Coding is the process of labeling or coding reoccurring themes or accounts of participants' experiences. According to Merriam (1998), "Some systems for organizing and managing data need to be devised early in your study" (p.164). Patterns and themes were defined within the transcripts by using a priori theming and coding techniques. A priori themes were elicited from the study's theoretical framework, and accelerated the initial coding phase of analysis. Additionally, coding and categorizing data assists in relating and constructing meaningful themes to raw data; then in turn

provides an understanding to the study's purpose. Merriam (1998) agrees and believes that a system of coding is "nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p. 165).

According to Creswell (2007), "In the process of interpretation, researchers step back and form larger meanings of what is going on in the situations and sites" (p. 154). Of course, the interpretation of data is the key to qualitative research. The essence of qualitative research is to make sense of phenomena under study while addressing the research purpose. Stake (1995) states "[interpretation] concentrate[s] on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully –analysis and synthesis" (p. 75). This interpretation of data emphasizes the importance of analyzing and understanding the participants' as well as the researcher's perspective.

### **Representing and Visualizing Stage**

Once data was coded and categorized, the analysis stage created an emphasis on visualizing the data. Tables and figures were utilized to make sense of themes and coding of data from this study. According to Creswell (2007), "We experiment with many forms of analysis – making metaphors, developing matrices and tables, and using visuals – to convey simultaneously breaking down the data and reconfiguring them into new forms"( p. 43).

Identifying key elements and relations between data were critical in the analysis of the data.

From this analysis, naturalistic generalizations became known which signified the elements for transferability of the study findings. According to Stake (1995), naturalistic generalization is described as "the conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85). The data provided by the research needs to be thorough enough and



detailed enough to allow the reader the determination of transferability to their personal environment.

### **Trustworthiness: Reliability, Validity, and Rigor**

It is critical to conduct qualitative research with consistency in order to achieve trustworthiness, validity and rigor with the study and to establish a level of confidence in the research. Merriam (1998) stated that, “Every researcher wants to contribute results that are believable and trustworthy” (p. 218). Care was taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the design and the data collection, analysis and interpretation of the information and insights gathered from participants.

According to Guba (1981), four criteria for ensuring the validity of a qualitative research paradigm are essential in qualitative research: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

Later, Lincoln and Guba (1985) broaden the concept of validity in qualitative research to the more encompassing one of trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) felt the basic question addressed by the concept of trustworthiness involves “how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to” (p. 290). This research design utilized the four fundamental elements depicted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as essential for ensuring rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research. Table 7 outlines these elements.

Table 7. *Lincoln and Guba’s Fundamental Elements to Ensure Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research*

Fundamental Element for Trustworthiness	Description	Explanation of Applicability in this Research
Credibility (Internal Validity)	Believability of the research, or congruency of the findings of the	Provided adequate time in the field (focus groups and

	research, refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality; depends less on the sample size and more on the richness of the information gathered and how that information is analyzed; poses the question of whether the findings are believable	surveys); pilot (peer review) of process and content of focus groups questions and surveys; triangulation of data; theming and pattern-matching
Transferability (External Validity)	Extent that the research results can be or transferred to other contexts or settings	Consistency in process utilizing protocols; providing rich-thick data; detailed methodology
Dependability (Reliability)	Refers to the research process being logical, traceable and clearly documented; use of an audit trail allows others to examine the methods, conclusions and findings.	Transparency of the data obtained; audit trail of data collection methods, analysis, and conclusions leading to the findings; triangulation of the multiple data sources
Confirmability (Objectivity)	Refers to degree in which the results can be confirmed or corroborated; concerned with establishing that interpretations of findings are clearly derived from data	Pilot (peer review) of process and content of focus groups questions and surveys; researcher biography; detailed methodology

*Note:* Adapted from *Naturalistic Inquiry*, by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

## Credibility

The credibility criterion ensures that the results are believable from the perspective of the participants of the study (Trochim, 2006). A main point to consider is how congruent; how believable are the findings based on the data obtained and the conclusions drawn. Merriam (2002) states that in qualitative research, the findings of the study are interpreted through words, expressions or numbers gathered from the participants. She suggests for qualitative research that the meaning of the interpretation needs to be grounded on the participants' experiences and shared perceptions. Lincoln (1995) offers specific methods and strategies in which to accomplish credibility in qualitative research. These strategies include a) member checks, b) peer debriefing, c) prolonged engagement in the field and/or with the participants, d) persistent observation, and e) the implementation of an audit trail.

This study ensured credibility through the following strategies: (a) provided adequate time in the field (focus groups and surveys); (b) conducted a pilot (peer review) of the research process and content of focus group questions and surveys; (c) triangulation of data; and (d) theming and pattern-matching. To ensure adequate time in the field, eligible faculty participants were contacted via an email describing the purpose of the study and were asked to complete an online demographic survey and an online version of Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory. From respondents of the demographic survey, faculty participants were placed in a pool of potential participants for the faculty focus groups. Student participants were contacted via an email describing the purpose of the study and were asked to complete an online demographic survey and then were placed in a pool of potential participants for the student focus group. A pilot or peer review of the research process was conducted to alleviate any potential concerns associated with focus group questions and surveys. Triangulation was accomplished by the utilization of focus group transcripts, demographic survey analysis and field notes. Lastly, theming and pattern-matching were defined within the transcripts elicited from the study's theoretical framework and driving questions.

### **Transferability**

The transferability criteria expressly infers to the applicability of the findings to other phenomena or situations. Transferability or naturalistic generalization refers to the level that the reader can apply the findings to their own situation (Merriam 2002; Lincoln & Guba 1985). It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide enough contextual data and information for transferability by the reader.

This study demonstrated transferability through the following strategies: (a) provided a consistent protocol process; (b) provided rich-thick data; and (c) outlined a detailed research

methodology. Qualitative research generates large amounts of contextual data in multiple forms. The key to transferability of qualitative research is to make sense of data and find meaning from the documents, observations and field notes.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the research process being logical, traceable and clearly documented. The definitive aspect of dependability is whether the research findings make sense and corroborate with the data collected from the study (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Merriam 2002). Dependability can be achieved through the use of data auditing, traceability and consistency in the collection and analysis of the data.

This study ensured dependability through the following strategies: (a) transparency of the data obtained; (b) audit trail of data collection methods, analysis, and conclusions leading to the findings; and (c) triangulation of the multiple data sources.

### **Confirmability**

The confirmability, or objectivity of the research, refers to how well the results can be corroborated by others (Trochim, 2006). Confirmability is achieved when the data emerges from the data collected and not from the preconceived notion of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to confirmability as the degree to which the researcher can demonstrate the neutrality. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) this means providing “an audit trail consisting of: (a) raw data; (b) analysis notes; (c) reconstruction and synthesis products; (d) process notes; (e) personal notes; and (f) preliminary developmental information” (pp. 320-321).

This study demonstrated transferability through the following strategies: (a) conducted a pilot (peer review) of the research process and content of focus groups questions and surveys; (b) provided the researcher background as related to the research; and (c) detailed methodology.

Stake (1995) proposed the concept of naturalistic generalization which he described “as a partially intuitive process arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context” (p. 69). Stake’s emphasis is on the naturalistic approach and he described naturalistic generalizations as a way of leading audiences to vicarious experience and helping them think of their own problems in a new way and recognize essential similarities to cases of interest to them. It is in this manner that the basis for naturalistic generalization is established.

Qualitative researchers have a special responsibility to their subjects and readers in terms of trustworthiness. As there are no statistical tests for significance in qualitative studies, the researcher must discover and interpret the importance of what has been observed and of establishing the connection between what is observed and the conclusions that are drawn. Creswell (2007) posited the importance of rigor in qualitative research, “Rigor means, too, that the researcher validates the accuracy of the account using one or more of the procedures for validation, such as member checking, triangulating sources of data, or using peer or external auditors of the accounts” (p. 46). To enhance the trustworthiness in this study and to provide an audit trail of the research, the following three techniques were utilized: (a) field notes were used to triangulate the focus group transcripts; (b) triangulation of data sources; and (c) methodological log which documented significant decisions and processes.

### **Limitations**

The goal of this research was to provide insight on how the educational philosophy of faculty influences the persistence and graduation of adult learners in accelerated programs at a community college. Well-designed research will limit potential problems that could affect the research findings. According to Dawson Hancock and Bob Algozzine (2006), researchers with the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina, “Limitations are

factors that may affect the results of the study and that are generally beyond the control of the researcher” (p. 71). Furthermore, Creswell (2008) defines limitations as “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (p. 207). He further concludes that limitations “often relate to inadequate measure of variables, loss or lack of participants, small sample sizes, errors in measurement, and other factors typically related to data collection and analysis” (p. 207). It is critical to identify those limitations that could affect the trustworthiness and transferability of the research findings. The following two limitations have been identified as they relate to this research: (a) this study is a single case study and (b) the recall and bias of the participants.

### **Single Case Study**

Because this study is a case study of one community college, the results may only be applicable to a community college of similar size, operating in similar regions and cultures to those of the study site. While the findings might be of relevance to community college faculty and administrators, it is important to note that the culture and organizational structure of community colleges vary greatly; thus their programs and services which are available to adult learners could affect the transferability of the research. However, to enhance transferability of the findings, great care was taken to facilitate transparency of the design and the interpretation of the data and information gathered.

### **Participant Recall and Bias**

A second limitation to this study involves the faculty and student participants’ ability and/or willingness to recall their personal experiences. Student and faculty participants may have a vested interest in the success of the adult accelerated program and their responses might only reflect that viewpoint. Students, especially those who did not graduate, may not wish to

share their personal reasons for the unsuccessful completion of a degree in an adult accelerated program. Faculty may not be forthcoming with their answers on Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory, resulting in inaccuracy regarding information as to their educational philosophy.

Great care was taken during the focus groups and in the distribution of Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory in order to make participants feel comfortable and to maintain a conversational approach with the focus groups. Focus group participants and faculty taking the Zinn instrument were given an explanation regarding the importance of study and they were reminded that their answers would remain confidential. All measures were taken to create a non-judgmental atmosphere.

### **Researcher as Research Instrument**

The characteristics that make researchers the "instrument of choice" for qualitative inquiry are defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the human responsiveness to environmental cues, ability to interact with the situation, to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously, to perceive situations holistically, to access, process and seek verification of data and to explore unexpected responses. Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, analysis and interpretation of the findings, the importance for providing transparency in regards to their professional background assists the reader in understanding the contextual assumptions and bias of the researcher. Merriam (2009) asserts that researchers need to state "their assumptions, experiences, worldview and theoretical orientation to the study at hand" (p. 219). Revealing this information provides the reader with a more realistic understanding regarding how the researcher might have come to the interpretation of data and conclusion stated in the research (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1979 from the University of Illinois and in 1998 a Master in Arts from DePaul University. Nancy began her career in the community college field as the Director of Admissions, Records and Registration at Elgin Community College. From 1984 to 1989, she was responsible for providing leadership of enrollment services that impact student recruitment. In 1989, she accepted the position of Director of Career Services at College of DuPage. Nancy served eighteen years as Director of Career Services and was responsible for development, implementation and leadership of educational support programs. During this time, she was adjunct faculty in the Adult Fast Track program at College of DuPage teaching courses in management and business. Concurrent to her professional appointments at College of DuPage, she began teaching adult learners in 1998 at Benedictine University and National Louis University (NLU) in both traditional and accelerated academic programs.

In 2007, she accepted the position of Special Assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs (which later became the Director of Adult Learning) at William Rainey Harper College. Her overarching responsibility was to provide leadership for the adult population enrolled at Harper College. She was charged with developing and managing the programs of the Professional Advancement and Learning Center which is home to the adult accelerated learning degrees and certificate programs. Nancy conceptualized and implemented the Harper Career Stimulus program, an academic support program for adults who are unemployed, underemployed or in career transition. Additionally, she developed the Weekend Advantage program, targeting adults interested in obtaining an associate degree while taking courses exclusively on the weekends. In August of 2011, Nancy was promoted to Dean of Workforce and Economic Development.



## **Chapter Summary**

The knowledge, expertise and close interaction that the researcher has with community college faculty and students has relevance to this study. Nancy places a great amount of importance, time and energy towards teaching and supporting the needs of adult students. Her passion is to serve as an advocate for the adult learner in the community college.

The research focused on the way faculty educational philosophy influences adult learners in community college accelerated programs. The parameters of this research were best suited to those qualities which the qualitative single case study methodology offers. Purposeful sampling was selected to identify the two groups of participants, faculty who had taught in the adult accelerated Associates of Applied Science degree program during 2007-2009 and adult students who were enrolled in one of the three Fast Track Associate of Arts program during 2007-2009 and either earned their degree or students who did not complete the required degree requirements. Further, maximum variation sampling was utilized to narrow participant selection and to ensure the selection of students and faculty that would represent diverse perspectives. Data collection was accomplished through the utilization of focus groups, surveys and field notes. Data storage will be under the sole control of the researcher and will be securely maintained for five years after the completion of the research. The analysis of the data incorporated Merriam's (1998) recommendation that the data be analyzed as it was collected and followed Creswell's (2007) procedure of data managing, reading and memoing, classifying and interpreting, and representing and visualizing.

Trustworthiness was achieved by assuring that the four vital criteria for achieving validity, as stated by Guba (1981), were accomplished. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Reflective field notes were utilized to keep the

focus of the data collection on the study participants and minimize researcher bias. The researcher maintained the rigor of the research through the use of triangulation of data sources and an audit trail. These considerations were employed to ensure the credibility of the research and the transferability of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION**

The purpose of this study was to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influences the persistence and retention of adult learners in community college accelerated programs. One intention of this research was to provide insight into adult learners' expectations about faculty teaching in these accelerated programs. The study was also interested in faculty expectations of adult learners. A consistent, methodical process was employed to establish transparency in the research process and credibility of the findings through the following strategies: (a) clarity of the data obtained; (b) audit trail of data collection methods, analysis, and conclusions leading to the findings; and (c) triangulation of the multiple data sources. Three participant groups were used in this study: faculty teaching in any of the three Associates of Applied Science accelerated degree programs between the academic years of 2007 and 2009 and two groups of students, those who graduated and those who did not complete the degree requirements between the academic years of 2007 and 2009.

### **Data Collection and Contact Protocol**

In order to provide a framework to achieve consistency in data collection and analysis, Creswell's four-stage analytical framework (2007) was followed: (1) managing data; (2) reading and memoing; (3) classifying and interpreting; and (4) representing and visualizing the data. The vast, rich amount of data that were collected required careful management. There was an emphasis on maintaining the data in a clean and clear format that was easily retrievable and useable for analysis.

Research data was generated by multiple sources which included: (a) online demographic surveys, (b) Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Educational Inventory (PAEI), (c) field notes, and (d) transcriptions of focus group interviews. The data derived from demographic surveys of

both faculty and students as well as the results from the Philosophy of Adult Educational Inventory were captured through SurveyMonkey. This web-based tool allowed for enhanced data collection such as coding and graphic displays, which assisted with data analysis leading to the research findings. Transcripts of the three focus groups provided written documentation from the approximately hour-long sessions. “Focus groups can generate large amounts of data in a relatively short time span,” providing rich and in-depth data (Rabiee, 2004, p. 656). All focus groups were approximately one hour in length. Rabiee (2004) states that “a one-hour interview could easily take five to six hours to transcribe in full, leading to thirty to forty pages of transcripts” (p. 657). To manage this amount of data requires careful, iterative review of the transcripts, including disposal of non-relevant material and making sense of the results by maintaining a firm understanding of the study’s purpose and intention.

All data were organized by faculty and student status. The student status was further delineated based on those students who completed their degree in an adult accelerated modality and those students who did not complete their degree. Documents were color-coded and placed in secured filing locations; they were also secured on two separate flash drives. Field notes were transcribed from hand written notes, aligned with the focus group data, and maintained in a secure manner.

The reading and memoing stage marked the beginning of defining the theoretical framework in which data analysis would take place. The reading and memoing stage required that the surveys, documents, field notes and transcripts were read and listened to multiple times. This ensured that there was a close familiarization with the data. Rabiee (2004) states that “the goal of this stage should be to immerse in the details and get a sense of the whole before breaking it into parts” (p. 657). Additionally, during this stage, notes and memos were written in

the text of the transcripts, which helped to develop categories for future data analysis. The notes and memos took the form of short phrases, ideas and concepts. Rabiee (2004) identifies this stage as the point at which “descriptive statements are formed and an analysis is carried out on the data under the questioning format” (p. 657).

### **Faculty Focus Group Pilot**

A focus group pilot was conducted to ensure consistency of the data collection process and to determine the understanding and ease of use of the faculty demographic survey, the online version of Zinn’s (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI), and focus group interview questions. The faculty pilot was conducted on January 26, 2011, beginning at 1 p.m. and ending at 2 p.m. This pilot group was comprised of four faculty who taught in any of the three Associates of Applied Science accelerated degree programs (Management, Marketing, or Computer Information Systems) between the academic years of 2007 and 2009.

A vital function of the pilot was to test the capability of the audio recording devices. The following equipment was used to ensure that focus group data were captured completely: (1) Shure handheld microphones, (2) Tascam SSR1 flashcard recorder, and (3) Tascam DV-RA1000HD hard drive recorder. Additionally, this session was recorded using the Livescribe Echo Smartpen and an Apple iPhone.

This pilot provided an opportunity to hone the researcher’s interview skills as well as provided her with the opportunity to practice the sequence and timing of asking questions during the focus groups while maintaining a rapport with the participants. According to Krueger (1994), focus groups are a unique way of generating rich data that can only be granted through the synergy of group interaction. None of the data gleaned from this pilot was used in the study.

The data collection pilot was successful, resulting in minor changes to the sequence and timing of the focus groups so as to maintain proper rapport with the participants while engaging

them in group dialogue. None of the focus group questions were altered, but additional probing questions were added to enhance the collection of data as well as to build additional rapport with participants.

### **Faculty Contact Protocol**

Data collection construction, among faculty research participants, consisted of a multi-method construction process that took place during two phases: 1) the initial demographic and Zinn survey was sent to all eligible participants, and 2) those from the eligible group volunteered to be in a small representative focus group. Eligible participants were drawn from a database of faculty who were teaching in any of the three Associates of Applied Science Fast Track degree programs between the academic years of 2007 and 2009; 111 faculty were identified in all. These 111 eligible faculty were contacted initially on March 3, 2011, via an introductory email, which described the study's purpose and what their participation would entail. The data collection process began by emailing faculty the website link to the demographic survey on SurveyMonkey as well as the online version of Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). The faculty demographic survey consisted of 10 questions of fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice formats as presented in Appendix F.

Nine faculty participants were eliminated due to undeliverable email accounts and their names were removed from the database of eligible faculty participants, leaving the number of eligible faculty at 102. Of the 102 remaining eligible faculty, 10 faculty responded, or 9.8% of the faculty contacted, as a result of the March 3, 2011, email. A second follow-up email was sent on March 10, 2011, to only those faculty (92 faculty who did not respond to the first introductory email requesting their participation). The second email again included an explanation of the study and the website link to the demographic survey on SurveyMonkey as

well as the online version of Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). The second email request elicited an additional 22 faculty participants, bringing the number of eligible faculty for the two surveys to 32, or 31.4% of the 102 individuals contacted. Faculty were instructed to complete Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI), followed by the demographic survey, which included a request for faculty volunteers to take part in a focus group. Table 8 illustrates the faculty contact protocol timeline and response rates for the faculty survey.

Table 8. *Faculty Contact Protocol Timeline and Response Rate*

Survey Dates	No. of Faculty	<i>n</i>	%
March 3, 2011	102	10	9.8%
March 10, 2011*	-	22	21.6%
Totals	102	32	31.4%

*\*The same survey was re-sent to the 92 faculty members who did not respond to the first survey.*

For many years, a survey's response rate was viewed as an important indicator of survey quality. High survey response rates were thought to help ensure that survey results were representative of the target population and were necessary to produce accurate and useful results. More recent studies have challenged the assumption that a lower response rate means lower survey accuracy and/or validity. The relationship between response rate and survey quality has become much less clear (American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2011). A survey's response rate is the result of dividing the number of people who respond by the total number of people in the sample who are eligible to participate. As a rule of thumb, 10% to 20% is a common survey response. The faculty survey response in this study is 31.4%.

## Faculty Demographic Data

As was previously mentioned, a total of 32 faculty or 31.4% of the eligible participants responded to the online version of Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) and the demographic survey. Of those who responded, thirteen or 40.6% were male and 19 or 59.4% were female. The great majority of faculty respondents, 78%, were age 46 or older; 87.5% of the faculty respondents were white, non-Hispanic. Twenty or 62.5% of the faculty respondents taught courses in the Applied Science divisions, whereas 12 or 37.5% of the faculty were instructors in the General Education division of the accelerated degree programs.

Table 9 displays the number of years that faculty have taught, either full time or part time. The majority of faculty respondents have between 2 to 15 years of teaching experience, with a limited number having more than 16 years of teaching experience. Almost all respondents, 26 or 81.3%, hold a master's degree, with 5 or 15.6% holding degrees higher than a master's degree. Only one faculty member had a bachelor's degree, but was able to teach in the AAS program because faculty who teach in the computer information program can be hired based on a combination of industry expertise and educational credentials. There was an equal distribution of faculty who had prior experience teaching accelerated courses in general education and applied sciences disciplines.

Table 9. *Demographics of Survey Faculty Participants*

Characteristics		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	13	40.6%
	Female	19	59.4%
	Total	32	100%
Age Group			
	25 – 30 years	-	-
	31 – 35 years	2	6.3%



36 – 40 years	5	15.6
41 – 45 years	-	-
46 – 50 years	5	15.6%
51 – 55 years	6	18.8%
56 – 60 years	10	31.3%
Over 60 years	4	12.5%
Total	32	100%

#### Ethnicity

Asian or Pacific Islander	1	3.1%
American Indian or Alaskan	-	-
Black, non-Hispanic	1	3.1%
Hispanic	2	6.3%
White, non-Hispanic	28	87.5%
Total	32	100%

#### Faculty Teaching Division/Department

Accounting – AAS	2	6.3%
Computer Info – AAS	1	3.1%
Economics – AAS	1	3.1%
English – Gen Ed	2	6.3%
Management – AAS	16	50.0 %
Philosophy – Gen Ed	1	3.1%
Speech – Gen Ed	5	15.6%
Student Develop – Gen Ed	4	12.5%
Total	32	100%

#### Years Teaching: Part-time Faculty

2 – 5	6	18.8%
6 – 10	12	37.5%
11 – 15	7	21.9%
16 – 20	4	12.5%
21 – 25	1	3.1%
25+	1	3.1%
No Response	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

#### Years Teaching: Full-time Faculty

2 – 5	22	68.8%
6 – 10	2	6.3%
11 – 15	6	18.8%

16 – 20	-	-
21 – 25	-	-
25+	1	3.1%
No Response	1	3.1%
Total	32	100.1%

#### Highest Degree Earned

Bachelor of Arts	1	3.1%
Master of Arts	13	40.6%
Master of Science	6	18.8%
MBA	7	21.9%
PhD	3	9.4%
DBA	1	3.1%
JD	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

#### Faculty Teaching Division/Department Experience

Accounting – AAS	4	12.5%
Computer Info – AAS	3	9.4%
Economics – AAS	4	12.5%
English – Gen Ed	4	12.5%
Management – AAS	8	25.0%
Philosophy – Gen Ed	2	6.3%
Psychology – Gen Ed	1	3.1%
Speech – Gen Ed	2	6.3%
Student Develop – Gen Ed	4	12.5%
Total	32	100.1%

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#### Faculty Focus Group Selection Process

What was singularly impressive, of the 32 faculty survey respondents, 26 or 81% agreed to participate in the faculty focus group. Of the faculty who responded, the majority of their primary educational philosophies were equally distributed between liberalism, behaviorism and progressivism, for a total response count of 36. The Zinn (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) provides faculty not only their primary category, but also a secondary

category. Generally, Zinn (1991) suggests that educators will have one or perhaps two dominant philosophies or a dominate and a secondary category. Table 10 displays the primary Zinn educational philosophy categories of the 39 faculty respondents. Two faculty members identified their primary educational philosophy as humanism; one faculty identified his educational philosophy as radicalism. However, none of the three were interested in participating in the focus group.

Table 10. *All Faculty Participants' Educational Philosophy Using Zinn's Categories*

Zinn's Categories	Response Count	Response Percent
Liberalism	10	31.3%
Behaviorism	12	37.5%
Progressivism	14	43.8%
Humanism	2	6.3%
Radicalism	1	3.1%

The names of the 26 respondents were placed into a pool of potential focus group participants. Selection for the faculty focus group was based on the following selection criteria: (a) taught in the adult accelerated program, (b) taught in any of the three AAS degree programs, and (c) was a full-time PCC faculty or adjunct faculty member currently employed in the field. To facilitate inclusion and gain a cross-sectional representation of all five categories of Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) in the faculty focus groups, an additional selection criterion was stipulated. Careful consideration was given to the selection of two faculty who would represent the humanism and radicalism categories, enabling representation of all five educational philosophies. Even though special care was taken to secure representation of the

five educational philosophies, none of those volunteering to participate in the focus group reported a primary score in the humanist or radical educational philosophy. A review of initial responses showed that several faculty participants had secondary categories that were the same or very close to their primary categories. Thus by drawing from the secondary educational philosophy category, all five educational philosophies were represented in the faculty focus group.

Faculty who indicated that they were interested in participating in the focus group were first divided by Zinn's five educational philosophies. Each one of these faculty were sent a list of potential focus group meeting dates and times. Using those responses from faculty regarding dates, times, and educational philosophies, participants were randomly selected from the appropriate pool of faculty. The faculty who were not selected to participate in the focus groups were notified and thanked for their interest.

The faculty who were selected to participate in the focus groups was notified to attend a focus group session on April 26, 2011. Ten faculty members accepted the invitation to participate in the faculty focus group. On the day of the focus group, one faculty member arrived unexpectedly and was invited to join the focus group. This increased the total number of faculty to 11.

One faculty had the same score for liberalist and behaviorist educational philosophies. Additionally, two faculty had the same score for behaviorist and progressive educational philosophies. Table 11 represents the distribution of faculty focus group participants' primary and secondary educational philosophies, according to Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI).

Table 11. *Primary and Secondary Educational Philosophy Categories of Focus Group Faculty*

Category	Liberalism	Behaviorism	Progressivism	Humanism	Radicalism
Primary	4 *	2*	6	0	0
Secondary	0	5**	4**	3	1

*\*One Faculty had a tied score between liberal and behaviorist.*

*\*\*Two Faculty had a tied score between behaviorist and progressivism.*

Appendix J reports the responses of the faculty who participated in the faculty focus group to Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI). The top score of five educational philosophies, from Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory of faculty participants of the faculty focus group, was bolded.

### **Faculty Focus Group**

A faculty focus group was facilitated on April 26, 2011, beginning at 3:00 p.m. and ending at 4:10 p.m. Eleven faculty members who had taught in any of the three Associates of Applied Science Fast Track degree programs between the academic years of 2007 and 2009 participated. The duration of the faculty focus group session was 70 minutes. It was held in the Center, at the case study site. The participants were presented with a copy of the interview questions (Appendix C) to refer to during the focus group.

### **Student Focus Group Pilot**

A focus group pilot was conducted to ensure consistency with the data collection process. To determine the understandability and ease of the student demographic survey and to check how well the recording technology worked, the student focus group pilot was conducted on January 24, 2011, and began at 9 a.m. and ended at 10 a.m. It comprised of two graduates from one of the three Associates of Applied Science Fast Track degree programs (Management, Marketing or Computer Information Systems) between the academic years of 2007 and 2009

along with one student who did not complete the degree requirements between the academic years of 2007 and 2009.

None of the data gleaned from the student pilot demographic survey or focus group interviews were used in the research study. The data collection pilot was successful and resulted in providing only minor changes in the sequence and timing of conducting the focus groups while engaging them in a group dialogue. None of the focus group questions were altered, but additional probing questions were added to ensure consistency of responses and maintain rapport with participants.

A vital function of the pilot was to test the capability of the audio recording devices. The following equipment was used to ensure that focus group data were captured completely: (1) Shure handheld microphones, (2) Tascam SSR1 flashcard recorder, and (3) Tascam DV-RA1000HD hard drive recorder. Additionally, this session was recorded using the Livescribe Echo Smartpen and also an Apple iPhone.

### **Student Contact Protocol**

Data collection construction, among student research participants, consisted of a multi-method construction process that took place during two phases: 1) the initial demographic survey was sent to all eligible participants, and 2) those from the eligible group volunteered to be in a small representative focus group. Eligible participants for this study were adult students enrolled in one of three Fast Track Associates of Applied Science degree programs (Management, Marketing or Computer Information Systems) between the academic years of 2007 and 2009. Data were organized according to those students who completed their degree in an adult accelerated modality and those students who did not complete a degree in an adult accelerated modality. Two distinct groups were used during the focus group sessions to enable the

researcher to capture a more holistic student perspective. The researcher employed the same student demographic data survey for both student groups in order to provide a consistent context.

Eligible student names were obtained from the research-site database. This included 148 students who completed their associate degree requirements and 298 students who did not complete their associate degree. These 446 total eligible students (graduates and non-graduates) were initially contacted via an introductory email which described the study's purpose and what their participation on March 3, 2011, would entail. Of the 446 eligible students, 11 student graduate participants and 45 non-graduates were eliminated due to undeliverable email accounts, leaving 390 students eligible to participate in the study.

As depicted in Table 12, 31 students (graduates and non-graduates) or 7.9% responded to the March 3, 2011, introductory email. A second follow up email was sent on March 10, 2011 to only those students (graduates and non-graduates) who did not respond to the first introductory email. An additional 38 students or 9.7% responded to the second email request. A total of 69 students or 17.7% responded to the two emails. These students were asked to complete the student demographic survey on SurveyMonkey which consisted of 10 questions in both fill-in-the-blanks and multiple-choice formats, as presented in Appendix G.

Table 12. *Student Survey Contact Protocol Timeline and Response Rates*

Survey Dates	No. of Students	<i>n</i>	%
March 3, 2011	390	31	7.9%
March 10, 2011*	-	38	9.7%
Totals	390	69	17.7%

\* *The same survey was re-sent to the 359 student members who did not respond to the first survey.*

Therefore, 69 students completed a demographic survey and were considered eligible candidates to participate in a focus group. Of those 69, a total of 37 students or 68.5% (from both the graduates and non-graduates) indicated that they would be interested in participating in a focus group. These respondents were placed into the appropriate pool of potential participants. Respondents included 19 graduates who indicated that they were interested in attending the focus group, with 18 non-graduates who indicated that they were interested in attending the non-graduate interest group. Each student was sent a list of potential focus group meeting dates and times. Using the responses from students as to their availability of dates and times, participants were randomly selected to participate in the focus groups.

### **Student Demographic Data**

A total of 69 students, or 17.7% of eligible graduates and non-graduates completed identical web-based student demographic surveys. Of all respondents, 42 or 60.9% were females and 28 or 40.6% were males. There was a fairly even distribution regarding respondents' ages (25 to 55), with limited students in the age range of older than 60. The majority of students were white, non-Hispanic. The majority of student respondents, 44 or 63.8%, were employed while taking courses in one of the accelerated degree programs. Student demographic data is illustrated in table 13.

Table 13. *Demographics of Survey Student Participants*

Characteristics		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	28	40.0%
	Female	42	60.0%
	Total	69	100%
Age Group	25 – 30 years	11	15.9%
	31 – 35 years	9	13.0%



	36 – 40 years	13	18.8%
	41 – 45 years	11	15.9%
	46 – 50 years	9	13.0%
	51 – 55 years	10	14.5%
	56 – 60 years	4	5.8%
	Over 60 years	2	2.9%
	Total	69	99.80%
Ethnicity			
	Asian or Pacific Islander	4	5.8%
	American Indian or Alaskan	-	-
	Black, non-Hispanic	5	7.2%
	Hispanic	5	7.2%
	White, non-Hispanic	55	79.75%
	Total	69	99.95%
Employment Status			
	Employed	44	63.8%
	Unemployed	10	14.5%
	No Response	15	21.7%
	Total	69	100%

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To provide a perspective on where the students worked during the time they actively were engaged in seeking a degree, they were asked to provide the name of their company, their job title, number of years they had been in their current position and number of hours they worked per week. According to Knowles (1980), adult learners have an accumulation of life and work experiences that add to the classroom experience. As an enhancement to their learning, most adults need a practical, real-life application of knowledge, and bring prior knowledge and experience into the classroom.

According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009), the top three industries in the research site's district were financial services, professional and business services, and informational technology. Student demographics also reflected these top three industries as their

places of employment. Appendix K reports employer, job title, years in current position and hours worked per week of the student respondents. The number of years for students in their current position is illustrated in Table 14. The mean was 7.8 years; the median was 4 years and the mode was 1 year. Table 14 also illustrates the number of hours worked per week. The mean was 45.9 hours, the median was 42.5 hours and the mode was 40 hours. Of the 44 students who indicated they were employed while attending college, 41 or 93.2% worked 40 or more hours per week; 3 or 6.8% indicated that they worked between 30 and 39 hours per week.

Table 14. *Student Survey Employment Information*

Years/Hours Worked	Mean	Median	Mode
Years in Current Position	7.8	4	1
Hours worked per Week	45.9	42.5	40

Students were asked to list all colleges they had attended in the past and list their courses of study. This question was relevant based on the work of Tinto (1997). He explored how student learning could be enhanced and he felt that the classroom was the center of higher educational activity and thus a key to adult retention. Adult learners tend to enroll and then leave their academic studies if colleges do not create the type of learning environment that enables them to feel secure and capable of successfully engaging in activities that facilitate the completion of their educational objectives. This provided information on the number of colleges that students had attended and the years of attendance at other post-secondary institutions.

What was significant with the study student respondents was the fact that very few had attended accelerated programs in the past. Only 8 or 11.6% of students (Table 15) had taken

adult accelerated courses prior to attending PCC. Forty-six or 66.7% of students had not taken adult accelerated courses prior to attending PCC.

Table 15. *Student Survey of Prior Adult Accelerated Course Experience*

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	8	11.6%
No	46	66.7%
No Response	15	21.7%
Total	69	100%

### **Student Graduates Focus Group**

Nineteen graduates indicated they were interested in attending the focus group. Ten students who had earned one of three Associates of Applied Science Fast Track degrees between the academic years of 2007 and 2009 were invited and committed to participate in the focus group. However, of the 10 student graduates who agreed to attend the focus group at the specified location, time and date, only 3 arrived and participated. In the morning and afternoon of April 25, 2011, the remaining 7 student graduate participants notified the researcher of circumstances that made it impossible for them to participate. Being notified so late made it impossible to add any additional student graduate participants.

The student graduate focus group was facilitated on April 25, 2011, beginning at 6:00 p.m. and ending at 7:00 p.m. Participants were presented with a copy of the interview questions (Appendix D) to refer to during the focus group. The duration of the session was 60 minutes. It was held in the Center, at the case study site.

### **Student Non-Graduates Focus Group**

Eighteen non-graduates indicated they were interested in attending the non-graduate interest group. Ten students who had not completed any of the three Associates of Applied Science Fast Track degree programs between the academic years of 2007 and 2009 were invited and committed to participate. Of the 10 non-graduate students, six non-graduate students participated. In the morning and afternoon of April 25, 2011, three student non-graduate participants notified the researcher that circumstances made it impossible for them to participate. Being notified so late made it impossible to add any additional student non-graduate participants. One student non-graduate came 30 minutes after the focus group started and was not included in the focus group.

The non-student graduate focus group was facilitated on April 25, 2011, beginning at 7:10 p.m. and ending at 8:22 p.m. Participants were presented with a copy of the interview questions (Appendix E) to refer to during the focus group. The duration of the non-graduate student focus group session was 72 minutes. It was held in the Center, at the case study site.

In order to maintain consistency in data collection, purposeful sampling was done to identify the participant groups. The participant groups included faculty who had taught in the adult accelerated Associates of Applied Science degree program during 2007 to 2009 and adult students who were enrolled in one of the three Fast Track Associate of Arts programs during 2007 to 2009. Adult students were further divided into those students who earned their degree and those who did not complete the required degree requirements. Data collection was accomplished by conducting focus groups, administering surveys and writing field notes.

To ensure trustworthiness of the data collection process, the researcher adhered to a participant protocol and execution of the prescribed process. The two focus group pilots resulted

in minor changes to the interview questions. The researcher used reflective field notes to keep the focus of the data on the study participants, minimizing research bias. Demographic surveys completed by adult students and faculty, as well as Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) completed by the faculty, also served as an audit trail in establishing transparency regarding the gathered data. The goal of this chapter was to display data in a manageable format while providing a comprehensive and conceptual understanding of the integrated case attributes, with codes and themes retrieved from the data.

## CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to organize and analyze data which was derived from the three focus group responses and the surveys. Data elicited from the focus groups and surveys were analyzed to determine how and in what ways educational philosophies of faculty influence the persistence and graduation of adult learners in a community college adult accelerated program. Analysis of the data is divided into two sections. The first section is comprised of the three focus group responses as elicited by the interview questions. The second section is an analysis of the aggregate information and data from multiple data sources by the two priori themes.

The use of the qualitative paradigm was employed to explain and to gain a further understanding of the participants' perceptions related to the research purpose of which little is known. During data analysis, general categories and themes appear from the in-depth, rich thick data gathered and interpreted by the researcher in order to explore the participants' perceptions, insights and meanings. Qualitative researchers are, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

The study's conceptual framework provides the lens or view through which the data and information gathered was analyzed. Providing the framework for analyzing and coding the themes were the five educational philosophies as presented by Lorraine Zinn (1999) and the factors that contribute to the retention of the adult learner based on the six assumptions as espoused by Malcolm Knowles (1980). Zinn's five educational philosophies utilized as a priori analytical themes are as follows in Table 16.

Table 16. *Zinn's Five Educational Philosophies for Coding*

Educational Philosophy	Description	Teacher Approach
Liberalism	Dialectic, lecture, study groups, contemplation, critical reading and discussion	The “expert”, transmitter of knowledge, authoritative
Behaviorism	Stimulus-response, behavior modification, competency based, trial and error and reinforcement focused	Manager, controller, predicts and directs learning outcomes
Progressivism	Gives learner practical knowledge and problem-solving skills, pragmatic knowledge	Organizer, guides learning through experiences that are educative, stimulates, instigates learning process
Humanism	Experiential learning, individuality, interactive, group tasks and discussions, team teaching and self-directed learning	Facilitator, helper, partner, promotes but does not direct learning
Radicalism	Consciousness raising, noncompulsory learning, autonomy, critical thinking and maximum interaction discussion groups	Provocateur, suggests but does not determine direction for learning

*Note: Adapted from Elias J. & Merriam S. (1995). Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education.*

The following are the six adult learning assumptions espoused by Malcolm Knowles (1980) and were also employed as a priori coding themes:

- (1) assures and reinforces why a subject matter is important to learn;
- (2) has arrived at a self-concept and needs to be seen as capable of self-direction;
- (3) has an accumulation of life experiences that add to the classroom experience;
- (4) readiness to learn depends on need;
- (5) is solution oriented and has practical application; and
- (6) is motivated by intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation.

### Focus Group Questions and Responses - Faculty Participants

**Interview Question 1:** *After taking the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory assessment, what did you discover about your educational philosophy?*

Not surprisingly, the majority of the faculty participants were not aware of their educational philosophy. Participants felt that after taking the Zinn (1991) assessment, the results provided them with insights into their teaching approach. Most participants believed that they had established their educational philosophy over the years, yet had not identified specific attributes and qualities regarding their teaching. However, even though faculty participants were not aware of their educational philosophy (according to the Zinn assessment), they felt they had adjusted their teaching approach when instructing adult learners as compared to traditional aged students.

Awareness of one's educational philosophy provides insight into the relationships between teacher and learner and serves to assist faculty in delivering content in a manner conducive to adult learners. It is important for faculty to be cognizant of their teaching philosophy as it is a significant element that impacts the persistence of adults particularly in accelerated community college programs. There is no doubt that a variance between teaching philosophy and educational objectives can be a significant barrier to the learning process for adults. When faculty are not aware of their educational philosophy, this mismatch could influence their relationship with adult learners in the classroom. Faculty participants in the focus group voiced they were initially unaware of their educational philosophies (Table 17).

Table 17. *Awareness of Faculty Educational Philosophy*

Participant	Response
A	"...I think it surprised me at first but then after I read it I'm like yeah that's pretty much me...I had never really put words to it, I sort of just automatically knew how I did what I thought I needed



to do, but I hadn't put a title or specific criteria to it."

- B "...I never knew that I had this or that type of teaching behavior..."
- C "...taking the test, the assessment, gave me verbiage for how I teach, because I never took a teaching philosophy class, never went through a mentorship, in graduate school, so I never had any sort of a formalized teaching philosophy...and so that was kind of interesting for me to see that my teaching methodologies had labels."
- D "...my highest was progressive and that surprised me, was higher than I thought it would be or maybe even wanted it to be but I think if I had taken this when I had first started teaching in the accelerated program it would have, it may have been different. I think over the past semesters I've changed because I went from never teaching adult students, all traditional undergraduates at a residential university freshmen through senior and had a lot of senior courses, capstone courses and I just approached that very differently..."
- E "Basically, progressive is my strength and that makes sense because it is business oriented and I that's, the one comment I was making was I was weakest on radical which was a little disappointing because as I said 38 years in the business world had beaten it out of me because I was a radical in the 60s, University of California, yay! Not anymore."
- J "...progressive is my first one and behaviorist is my second one. Progressive is my first one which surprises me..."

**Interview Question 2:** *Do you feel this is an accurate reflection of your teaching approach in the adult learner accelerated program?*

The majority of faculty participants believed that the Zinn assessment was an accurate reflection of their teaching approach in the adult learner accelerated program. These participants who felt the Zinn assessment was correct were seasoned faculty with teaching years ranging from six to twenty five years. Most of the faculty participants articulated that the accelerated program itself had a great deal of influence on their teaching approach. Interestingly, most expressed they had adapted their teaching approach to accommodate the rapid pace of teaching

an adult accelerated program. Only one faculty member felt that the Zinn assessment was not an accurate reflection of their teaching approach. This faculty felt that their teaching approach was geared towards a more traditional aged student. This individual also had less than five years of teaching experience as compared to the other faculty who had over six years teaching adult learners.

Zinn found, in general, more experienced teachers have a clearly defined philosophy which is confirmed by the results of the survey. In contrast, the less experienced teachers often find their Zinn survey scores relevant to specific teaching approaches fairly equal among three or more of the philosophies. Less experienced teachers may still be developing their beliefs and values about education and may still be influenced by the beliefs and values held by others. However, according to Zinn (1991), most educators have more than one educational philosophy they utilize in the classroom. Table 18 reflects the statements from this interview question, many of whom believed that Zinn's educational philosophy assessment was an accurate reflection of their teaching approach in the adult learner accelerated program.

Table 18. *Accurate Reflection of Faculty Educational Philosophy*

Participant	Response
D	"...I think over the past semesters I've changed because I went from never teaching adult students, all traditional undergraduates at a residential university freshmen through senior and had a lot of senior courses, capstone courses and I just approached that very differently and I think over the past few semesters the way I've approached the content in such a condensed amount of time, a lot of material to get out, trying to sift through what's important what's not, what do they really need by the end of the course, it has changed my approach to the teaching, so I think it is an accurate reflection although I think it would have been very different a few years ago..."
F	"...my profile and my approach to teaching is really that of active

involvement and it's very difficult, I'll just use one example, I teach management which is a course that consists of 20 chapters and I have to compress that right now that I'm teaching and I have to compress that in 6 weeks and it's nearly impossible to do active involvement with the students..."

J "...so I feel like it... matches my teaching very much..."

K "...I teach in the management program... and just a variety of different courses and I'm also teaching understanding the adult learners for fast track... my results are an accurate reflection of my teaching approach..."

**Interview Question 3:** *What are your expectations regarding adult learners in adult accelerated programs?*

All faculty participants identified one or more expectations of adult learners they taught in the accelerated program. These expectations included: (a) that adult learners come to class with professional experience which can be useful in their coursework; (b) they are self-directed; (c) they are motivated; and (d) they work best with practical-solution oriented applications. Most of the faculty expectations regarding adult learners paralleled those assumptions of adult learners espoused by Malcolm Knowles. According to Knowles, (1980) adult learners are motivated intrinsically and their readiness to learn is dependent upon their need or motivation. Additionally, many adult learners want and need their educational experience to be solution oriented and adult learners want to contribute to the facilitation of the classroom experience. In meeting the challenge of creating the optimal educational environment for the adult learner, it is important for faculty to understand that most adults need a practical, real life application of knowledge, and they bring prior knowledge and experience into the classroom. The majority of faculty also saw in their classrooms that the adult learner was motivated to learn when class content was tied to practical, real life applications.

Interesting to note, one faculty response was not reflective of any of the adult learner assumptions as espoused by Knowles, but rather a result of the program type (an accelerated

program). This faculty's expectation regarding adult students is that they attend every class. As she clarified, this expectation is not based on the adult students being intrinsically motivated to attend classes, but rather because the accelerated format of the program demands their attendance for each class. Table 19 represents faculty responses to the expectations of adult learners.

Table 19. *Faculty Expectations of Adult Learners in Adult Accelerated Programs*

Participant	Response
A	"...was kind of interesting to work with people at the beginning and sort of reinforce that thought that yes you are adults, you do bring something new and different to the table in these classes and go for it."
B	"...it's not only that they are motivated, but they wanted to be there and they decided to be there and they know why they are there..."
C	"...So I also have a very high expectation that not only are they coming and motivated and going to do the work..."
D	"...like I said it's a different format but I have discovered that the majority of them meet the challenge and I do, same thing everybody else experiences, I never have a problem getting students to discuss, throw a question out there and they're eager and willing to share their thoughts."
H	"...if you are comparing the fast track students to the regular semester students, it's very much night and day just in terms of I think life experiences, willingness to participate..."
I	"...I have an expectation that the students have been counseled well, that they understand what lies ahead of them and they are prepared for in my classes working 20-30 hours a week because it's the only way you're going to get through it. Our outcomes don't change because you've chosen to take a class in 6 weeks rather than 16 we still want you to be able to master the same material although you're going to have to do it in an accelerated pace."
K	"...Something that's very important to me and that you've all, all mentioned is having that student participation and bringing their industry knowledge into this classroom, discussing it, they are

such a, they are this program, and I feel like it's so important that when they come in every one of these students is made to feel so special and you know, and it's like you to see them succeed and get to their, get to their goal whether that's a two year degree or a four year degree or they're going on after that, but just help them get to their goal. These are so motivated eager students, and like you said, you just throw it out there and they run with it. And it's all because they are so motivated..."

**Interview Question 4:** *What do you believe strengthens the persistence of adult learners in adult accelerated programs?*

One of the more challenging concerns educators encounter working with the adult learner involves faculty playing a critical role in the persistence, retention and subsequent graduation of adult learners. Faculty shared a variety of perceptions as to what strengthens the persistence of adult learners in the adult accelerated program. These insights include: (a) faculty providing encouragement and support to adult learners until they build confidence; (b) the college providing administrative support and services to accommodate their busy schedules; (c) faculty being flexible and adaptive in the classroom; and (d) faculty presenting ways to infuse students' business or life experiences as well as expertise into the classroom discussions and activities.

The majority of faculty believed creating a collaborative, reflective and engaging environment strengthened the persistence of adult learners in the adult accelerated program. The majority of faculty also felt by providing practical, real-life applications in the classroom added to adult student's persistence and retention. Interestingly, faculty discussed a common occurrence in their classrooms; adult learners needed the support of other adult learners to aid in making them feel comfortable in class and more self-confident.

Zinn (1991) strongly believed that having knowledge of one's educational philosophy or teaching approach could better assist in the teaching of adult learners, thus impacting students' persistence and retention which leads to graduation. As faculty become more aware of their teaching approach and the expectations of adult learners and incorporate them into their

classroom teaching styles, adult learners feel respected and valued while more engaged in an educational process. All of this together can lead to increasing their retention and persistence.

Table 20 is reflective of the comments faculty provided regarding what elements would strengthen the persistence of adult learners in the adult accelerated program.

Table 20. *Elements that Strengthen the Persistence of Adult Learners*

Participant	Response
A	“...an instructor, who in addition to being able to teach what they need to teach, has the ability to sort of work with the student where they are until the student feels a little bit more stable and grounded and confident, because I think it takes them a class or two to really build that self-confidence...”
B	“...really the college itself attending to their needs in terms of physical facilities is also very helpful I think. ...what really gives them hope and persistence is the relationship that they will have with the teachers that we don’t talk down to them, but we respect their ideas, try to understand what, from where they are coming...”
C	“.... I think one of the biggest impacts teachers have, not just negative impacts, but in order to help a student succeed, is to be sometimes a cheerleader, sometimes a counselor and always to be open...”
D	“... but many of them have families, many of them are working full time, many of them are coming back, a lot of them are coming to my class right before or after another class that same evening, so they’ve got a lot on their plates... one of the things I think strengthens their persistence is the relationship they have with each other and the shared experience that they have...”
E	“...having come out of a business background I share a lot with my students that when I try to relate and connect and of course we have the advantage with the adult learners most of them have business experience...I think for me strengthening persistence though is to show them that they’re doing the right thing...”
F	“...one of the things that I believe that I bring and I think that other people in this room bring as well, that is, helps our students become more successful and kind of hooks them in and that is

that several people in here have mentioned that they have a business background that they draw from... so I see a lot of us in here as having that dimension of practical work experience that allows us to add things to their learning..."

I "...in order to get them to persist, what you need to do is get them to first succeed and so I really do try to structure my courses so that the early assignments are yeah you just have to turn it in so I can tell you what I am looking for so that we can make progress, so there's less expectation on the quality of the first assignment versus the last one, I want to see growth throughout the course but I want to see them succeed to start with so it might be garbage, but I say good start, good first attempt, and here's what I want to see on the next one..."

K "...I think as an educator our role is to give them our full support... I know what these folks are going through, they work all day, they have families, and then they come to school by night and they're spending four hours with us, and it's important, I tell all my classes, you gotta pat yourself on the back because this is not easy to do, and I commend you and I support you and let me always know how I can help you, and that support means everything..."

**Interview Question 5:** *Knowing your educational philosophy, how would this teaching philosophy hinder or enhance the persistence of adult learners in accelerated programs?*

The distinction between one faculty's educational philosophy and another faculty's educational philosophy is a reflection and validation of the individual's experiences, beliefs, and values. Understanding one's educational philosophy provides the frame of reference for evaluative reflection upon what one does in the classroom and why one does it. The intention of the study is not to endorse one educational philosophy over another but to gain a better understanding of daily decisions made by educators of adult accelerated programs. As faculty begin to clarify their teaching approach, they obtain a clearer picture of why they teach as they do, and how to deliver course content utilizing an approach that will assist students in meeting the desired student learning outcomes.

Faculty participants had one common suggestion to enhance the persistence of the adult learners in an accelerated academic program. The suggestion was not only to know one's personal educational philosophy but to adapt one's teaching approach to the students by using multiple educational philosophies as needed, which would provide an enhanced learning experience for the adult learner. Interestingly, most of the faculty felt their teaching approach should be modified to accommodate the adult learner. Most of the faculty confirmed the need to identify and clarify their educational philosophy as being essential to guide and facilitate the learning process in adult learners. As depicted in Table 21, the majority of the faculty respondents believed that adapting one's educational philosophy, appropriate to the students taking the course, would enhance the persistence of adult learners in accelerated programs.

Table 21. *Faculty Knowledge of Educational Philosophy and Persistence of Adult Learners*

Participant	Response
C	"...the non-trads really need flexibility on our part, and realizing that as a behaviorist... if I use a combination of liberalist and progressive and maybe humanistic I can get them through the course, you know doing a variety of different types of exercises and assignments that will get them the result of passing the course..."
F	"...I don't think it's so radical to assume that we cannot or can wear different hats in the classroom to accommodate the needs of the adult student. If one hat does not work...use the other hat..."
H	".... And my immediate reaction was Gee whiz unless you're humanistic you're probably not really you know empowering these people in their persistence. I mean that's just a very knee jerk type gut reaction but I was liberal and its business law you know so it's all analysis type stuff and that's all I care about and frequently tell them I don't care what the answer is I just want to know how you got there, and nowhere along the line do I say to them and I hope you become self-actualized as part of this. But I would think truly in terms of you know stroking them and reinforcing the persistence...by



understanding your style of teaching can assist the Fast Track student...”

J “... I’m progressive, you’re liberal, so I have a student that likes to learn with a liberal instructor and I’m not, that’s my weak point, then that student and I ... that’s going to be a barrier to that right away. So I like your idea that I need to be a little of everything...different teaching approaches...”

**Interview Question 6:** *Knowing your educational philosophy, what recommendations for faculty do you have that would enhance adult learners with their persistence in accelerated programs?*

The final question addressed in the faculty focus group was to acknowledge certain insights and to share recommendations with other faculty to enhance the retention and persistence of adult learners in accelerated programs. Teaching adult learners can require a more sophisticated teaching approach than teaching younger adults due to different and more complex life contexts. Some of the faculty respondents’ recommendations focused on the need for the classroom atmosphere to encourage learning and student participation. It was felt establishing an adult friendly classroom atmosphere conducive to creating many opportunities for student input and discussion would improve student persistence. Also, it was felt faculty needed to be more creative and adaptive in their delivery of course content, resulting in various avenues to motivate the adult learner.

Faculty recommended various teaching strategies to enhance the persistence of adult learners. These suggestions included: (a) acknowledging and encouraging adult learners for their aspiration to pursue and attain a degree, and (b) providing innovative, interactive activities into the classroom rather than relying on lecturing. Both of these suggestions employ some of Knowles’ (1980) assumptions of adult learners. Table 22 highlights the faculty recommendations for faculty to enhance adult learners with their persistence in accelerated programs.

Table 22. *Faculty Recommendations for Faculty to Enhance Adult Learners Persistence*

Participant	Response
B	“ Tell them they are smart for having to come to school, if they didn’t have decided to not to come to school, they would have been forced to come back to school two years down the road by the statistics given by government accounting office. Fifty-eight percent of the newly created jobs will require a minimum degree of bachelor’s degree...”
C	“...So my recommendations are have an understanding that especially for adult learners, that school has changed and it’s continuing to change, have access to technology, you cannot absolutely cannot come to a college now without having a computer at home, it’s doable, I would not recommend it, you will waste far more time going to that library or computer lab trying to get your stuff done than if you were able to multitask at home. Having internet at home also a necessity, but also understanding how you learned, you know, in the 70s or the 80s is not the same as how students learn today and that has been sort of a big challenge as especially for traditional teachers moving forward is how do we engage a student with a 15 second attention span. And adult learners are a little different than that, but most of us teach in that mode, so understanding, being ready to work, being motivated, putting the priority into the class and having the technology available to you which goes into economics and financial and all that kind of stuff which can be equally scary. And being willing to ask for help...”
I	“...Things I recommend they have would be time, flexibility, dedication, something nobody talked about here is focusing on their strengths, hopefully we’re still doing the StrengthFinder right ...Yes it would be nice if the faculty have flexibility...”
J	“...I just wanted to say the other thing we have to do is instill the love of learning and make that classroom exciting, I can’t stand there and lecture for 4 hours, I have to let go of my teaching and let them learn, and I think that’s very important...”

### **Focus Group Questions and Responses – Students Graduates**

#### **Interview Question 1:** *What did you find attractive about the adult accelerated program?*

The majority of student graduates indicated they were attracted to the adult accelerated program for a variety of reasons. The reasons shared by participants were: (a) convenience of attending classes one night a week; (b) shortened duration of time to obtain a degree; (c) courses which can easily be transferred to a 4-year institution for a bachelor's degree; and (d) programs offered that can advance their career.

To meet their personal academic goals, these student graduates voiced they were drawn to the adult accelerated program because of the convenience of attending one day a week. Therefore, they were able to plan work and family life schedules knowing they were to meet on the same evening each week. They also were attracted to the accelerated pace of the program where each course was six to eight weeks in duration. They saw the accelerated program as allowing them to “get on with their lives” by obtaining a degree in a shorter timeframe than degrees offered in the traditional 2-year format. These student graduates were also attracted to accelerated programs because of the specified base core courses offered for each degree. These students liked the prescribed courses and course sequence which provided a preplanned path to completing their degree requirements. Finally, these graduates saw the logic of these specific accelerated program offerings and felt all they needed to do was select which degree program best fit their career goals. These findings concurred with Malcolm Knowles' (1980) six adult learning assumptions that readiness to learn depends on the need or motivation of the adult learner. Often the adult learner is attracted to seeking post-secondary education based on a variety of personal needs and motivations—employment and advancing in the workplace being

among of those needs. Responses by participants regarding why they were attracted to the fast pace of the program are found in Table 23.

Table 23. *Student Graduate Attraction to the Adult Accelerated Program*

Participant	Response
A	“I wanted to teach in the Emergency Management program so in order to do that I had to actually have some kind of degree, so I was completely selfishly motivated...I had to finish my degree and I needed to do it as quickly as possible and so it was all about speed with me...each course was selected for you...it was convenient...”
B	“My motivation was very similar... I wanted an easy way to get a 2-year degree that would be easily transferred to a 4-year school and obtain a 4-year degree somewhere and I saw that, I observed that there were a number of 4-year schools that this program would transfer into. And it was a program with a cohort where the classes were all laid out and you were pretty much guaranteed to get through a 2-year degree in 2 years, and I had a few classes under my belt so I could skip them and that worked out well and Public Community College was recognized as a school that was easy to transfer to many of the other 4-year institutions I was looking at. So, and it was also close to home. So convenience, the organization of it so that you knew that you were going to get through in a certain amount of time and it was one night a week which worked into my work schedule.”
C	“...it was being late in my career and not sure exactly where I was going to go, it gave me an opportunity to get a baseline education to use as a secondary career path.... It also was attractive that it was all the base core courses that you needed to complete your degree...one night a week and complete the degree...a great convenience...”

**Interview Question 2:** *What expectations did you have as you entered into the adult accelerated program?*

Student graduate respondents' expectations were as varied as the students themselves. There seemed to be no consensus among the participants. Their expectations as they entered the adult accelerated program were as follows: (a) demands would be great due to the accelerated pace of the program; (b) all necessary course material would be covered in the classroom; (c)

their life and work experiences should be able to assist them in the classroom; and (d) because of the accelerated pace of the program, faculty would be efficient utilizing good time management principles in the classroom to cover all the content.

An expectation expressed by a majority of the student graduate participants was that the demands of the program would be great due to the accelerated pace of the program. Many adult learners have a variety of conflicting obligations and already have intensely busy lives.

Another expectation and concern conveyed by student graduate participants was the amount of material that needed to be covered in each of the adult accelerated courses. From the faculty's perspective, learning objectives of accelerated courses must be the same as traditionally-paced courses. From the student's perspective, they often can become overwhelmed if faculty attempt to cover exactly the same amount of material as is found in a traditional 16 week course. The participants confirmed this feeling of becoming overwhelmed with the course content, and assignments required in a condensed time period, when attending an accelerated degree program. Interestingly, these student graduates articulated they were equally concerned that the course content was not condensed or "watered-down" because of the fast pace and were emphatic that they receive the same quality of education regardless of the duration of the course.

In addition, these student graduates expected they could call on their life and work experiences to enhance their classroom learning experience. This concept is one of Knowles' (1980) six assumptions of adult learners. This concept argues that adult learners come into the classroom with an accumulation of life and work experiences and the incorporation of this knowledge with the specific course content can enhance the classroom learning experience. Therefore, to incorporate Knowles' assumption, faculty would address all of the course

objectives, but in a different manner in accelerated programs utilizing the student's own experiences to stress course content.

The final expectation from the student graduates was the notion of faculty time management in the classroom. Their expectation was faculty would practice good time management by "staying on track" in order to cover as much course content as necessary to meet the course learning objectives. It was apparent these student graduates did not comprehend any difference between general class materials and specific course content designed to meet the specific course learning objectives. Student graduate participants articulated that it was the responsibility of the faculty to decide how and what course content to cover to meet the student learning objectives for an adult accelerated course. An illustration of the common responses by participants regarding their expectations entering an adult accelerated program is found in Table 24.

Table 24. *Student Graduate Expectations of Adult Accelerated Programs*

Participant	Response
A	"...I guess if I had any expectations I would have probably expected to have to work harder... so I think it goes to what was said about maybe it was more of a we'll cover the material we can cover in the amount of time that we have, less than we're going to cover everything that we would cover in a 16 week class...but it's also not necessarily a factual statement to say that they didn't cover the material, maybe they covered all the material, but because it was all adult learners and it was all people who had life experience as well as work experience not 18 year olds, they could, they were able to bring in life experience..."
B	"... I expected to be very tightly managed from a time management standpoint and really stay on track to get through as much material as possible with facilitators that were great time managers and that we would set the course and stay on course and we would get through the programs...I knew it would be a grind to get through the program...it goes so fast..."

- C “... I hadn’t really been in any college classes before I walked in the door here and so I didn’t know if I was going through one class or all 6 or 7 classes, whatever I took there, and so I just took one step at a time and just kind of went along with the flow, and as it felt good and comfortable then I continued on, and so that was my expectation.”

**Interview Question 3:** *Did the way or manner which faculty taught the course have any influence on your decision to stay in the adult accelerated program?*

There was no consensus among the student graduates regarding if the manner in which faculty taught had any influence on their decision to persist in the adult accelerated program. The range of responses were: “I almost quit the program because of the instructor” to “I signed up and I had made the decision to do it, so I was going to get through it regardless of any other person or instructor” to “they seemed to be the experts in this fast track thing, because they just seemed to have the timing down right.” It seems quite apparent the student graduate participants possessed an intense internal desire and self-determination to be persistent and complete the necessary courses to finish a degree.

All respondents, however, indicated they reacted more positively and related better to faculty who brought real life practical knowledge into the classroom. They strongly voice the need for faculty to create an environment which promotes a desire to learn, which in turn motivates them to persist and complete their degree. An illustration of the common responses by participants regarding whether the way, or manner, which faculty taught the course have any influence on their decision to stay in the adult accelerated program are found in Table 25.

Table 25. *Student Graduate Effect on Persistence Based on Teaching Approach*

Participant	Response
A	“If anything that nutrition instructor almost made me quit the program... to think about whether or not I would go on, it just you know 15 hours and I’m done and there was just no thought process involved in the whole thing until I got to that one class, no I’m joking, she didn’t even, literally part of it was me and part of it was her and that’s the fact that we’re not going to get along

with everybody in the entire world so even that didn't make me reconsider my choice or the decision that I made to do this. I wanted to make sure that I had an associate earned within 25 years of graduating high school and that's what I did darn it, and nobody was going to take that away from me....some of the instructors made things interesting and made it fun to learn and to dig deeper maybe become exposed to something that you missed in high school...they made me want to learn..."

B "...I signed up and I had made the decision to do it, so I was going to get through it regardless of any other person or instructor or what have you so I was committed and I was going to get through it period. So the instructor had very little if any relevance for me."

C "... I think the instructors we had for the most part you know like I say they seemed to be the experts in this fast track thing, because they just seemed to have the timing down right... And when you're just about getting around the corner, or getting a little bored, the subject changed or something would change...the instructors were just common Joes so to say... they were just working stiffs like the rest of us and they provided us...with clear and real life experiences that we were able to put into place, or that I was able to marry up my concepts with what they were talking about."

**Interview Question 4:** *What were the facilitators that assisted you to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate?*

Student graduate participants indicated three facilitators or factors which assisted them to persist and complete their degree requirements. These facilitators shared by student graduate respondents were: (a) convenience of classes being held one evening a week; (b) the shortened duration of time to obtain a degree; and (c) current business and industry experience of faculty. These facilitators made attending college more manageable as they pursued their degree while juggling multiple life obligations.

Two of the attractions of adult accelerated programs were similar to two of the persistence facilitators shared by participants. These student graduates expressed their need to have a consistent, one night a week, calendar of courses. Knowing their course schedule for the



duration of their academic program provided a strong convenience and acted as an important facilitating factor assisting them to persist until graduation. The second attraction and perseverance factor was the condensing of courses and course time which, even though difficult, allowed them to graduate within a shorter period of time.

Student graduate participants strongly indicated that the faculty's real life business and industry experience was another factor that made an impact on their educational experience. They felt those faculty who brought real-life business knowledge into the classroom and incorporated it into the class content was a factor that kept them in the program. Not surprisingly, not only did these student graduates see this as a facilitator to their persistence, but many commented on the added advantage of being able to use information and incorporate it into their workplace. Table 26 illustrates some of the common responses from participants regarding the facilitators that assisted them to persist and graduate from the adult accelerated program.

Table 26. *Student Graduate Facilitators Who Assisted Adults to Persist and Graduate*

Participant	Response
A	"...the Tuesday-Wednesday was great, and emergency management because it's part of public safety was also put into the fire and police cohort but for adult learners to offer that, because I have evening meetings as well... having the ability to go one of two nights was great for me and not even because of a shift, it was because there were things happening in life and I have meetings on my calendar that are evening meetings that are both business and personal and I have the ability to keep doing those things and not miss out on other opportunities because of my education, so that was wonderful."
B	"...I think they all gave the same speech I the beginning of the new class, hey you're all adults and we don't, you're 18 or 19 year olds so we're going to go fast paced and there's none of this catch up kind of stuff that you either come along for the ride or we'll see you later, and that was kind of neat to see that they all had the same attitude in that regard..."

- C “...as the instructors were just the commons Joes, they were just working stiffs that just happened to have a second job teaching and they were pretty comfortable with it and I thought I related to the really well...they brought in real life scenarios to the classroom...”

**Interview Question 5:** *Were there any barriers you had to overcome to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate?*

Just as it is essential to discover what facilitators these individuals felt enabled them to continue and graduate from an adult accelerated program, the barriers or problems they needed to overcome in order to stay are also important to know. Three barriers were shared by the student graduate participants. The three barriers they felt needed to be addressed to improve graduation rates in the adult accelerated program were: (a) the high cost of out-of-district tuition; (b) staying motivated with courses that are not challenging since the course content is so familiar; and (c) completing all the admissions requirements necessary to be accepted in the adult accelerated program.

One major barrier expressed was the financial pressure experienced when needing to pay college tuition while meeting all other personal financial obligations. As the college offers adult accelerated programs open to anyone, it is not surprising that individuals living outside of the community college district enroll in the programs. However, as pointed out, this very fact increases the financial pressure of paying out-of-district tuition which is three times more costly than the tuition of in-district students. Another barrier was the difficulty to remain engaged in the class when the course content is so familiar or relatively easy to understand. Because the majority of students have a wealth of life and work experiences to draw on, therefore the course content is occasionally very well-known.

The last barrier expressed by student graduates involved the student affairs admissions department. They felt the need to complete all the admissions requirements to be accepted in the adult accelerated program without any type of appeal process was a barrier. One student shared

that he could not pass the college English placement assessment. He re-took the English placement assessment several times and finally had to take a developmental course before obtaining permission to enter the adult accelerated program. This individual expressed that he was a professional writer within his field and could not understand why he could not pass this assessment. The student graduates expressed their frustrations with the failure of the college to provide the customer service and an appreciation of the particular needs of the adult student. The respondents felt that the college would be wise to address these barriers in order to improve graduation rates in the adult accelerated program. The barriers articulated by the student graduate respondents are illustrated in Table 27.

Table 27. *Student Graduate Barriers to the Adult Accelerated Program*

Participant	Response
A	“I don’t really think I had any, if anything it would have been the tuition, because out of district is a lot more expensive...”
B	“There weren’t that many barriers...the barriers were classes where for me it was information that I was very familiar with already and it was difficult to maintain focus on a subject...”
C	“Mine was the English class, the English placement test. I for some reason just could not pass that test and, but I’m a professional writer, I wrote grants, wrote curriculums, wrote some small textbooks... but I couldn’t pass the test here and it was, and that really soured my taste and finally it took one of the gentlemen who ended up teaching me.”

**Interview Question 6:** *Describe what recommendations you can give faculty to assist the adult learner to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate?*

Needless to say, the student graduate participants were delighted to have the opportunity to provide some insights on how faculty can better assist the adult learner in academic accelerated programs. Student graduates expressed three recommendations for faculty to assist persistence and graduation rates. The following recommendations for faculty were: (a) to challenge adult learners in the classroom more aggressively than traditional aged students; (b) to provide professional development for faculty focusing on adult learners and how to teach in adult accelerated programs; and (c) to maintain a cohort format in the academic accelerated program.

These student graduate respondents confirmed they came into an accelerated program with an accumulation of life and work experiences that could definitely augment classroom learning. Thus, they recommended that faculty challenge students academically by focusing more on course content, with more in depth course lectures with subsequent classroom discussion. The second recommendation given was for faculty to receive appropriate professional development training regarding adult learners to improve their skills in teaching the adult student. Lastly, these student graduate respondents recommended the continuation of providing a cohort format for adults. These participants not only confirmed the cohort format provides a support system for all members, but they also felt when adult learners are involved in a cohort they often gain more knowledge from sharing their work expertise and experiences with one another. The recommendations stated in Table 28 represent an amalgamation of responses.

Table 28. *Student Graduate Recommendations to Faculty*

Participant	Response
A	“...adult students ...challenge them more, you know. We’re not the 18 year old coming in here who’s used to having everything handed to us by our high school teachers, we’re people who have been in the workforce who are used to

having to prove that we can do the job or get a lot of remediation or get fired...”

- B “...that faculty that get into the, that jump into the fast track program, you know it would be good if they could get some maybe, some advice and council from other faculty that have maybe taught both a sixteen week class and the accelerated program, or at least become familiar with the accelerated program to learn how to manipulate their syllabus and what they want to accomplish in a certain amount of time... it’s a grind, it really is and it does wear you down after a while, in summer, winter, spring, you know, all year round, but it’s a good thing to get behind you...”
- C “...the idea of the cohort as you have this group that congealed and kind of going together like an 8<sup>th</sup> grade thing, just staying together for the whole thing, so we allegedly all know our strengths and weaknesses...”

### **Focus Group Questions and Responses—Student Non-Graduates**

#### **Interview Question 1: *What did you find attractive about the adult accelerated program?***

Insights and information gathered from those students who did not graduate is also important to those faculty and administrators of community college adult accelerated academic programs. The views and perspectives of the student non-graduates reflect many of the selling features of adult accelerated programs used by community college admissions to entice the adult learner to enroll. Student non-graduates validated they were attracted to the adult accelerated program because: (a) of the convenience of attending class once a week; (b) the fast pace of getting a degree for career advancement; and (c) for attending courses only with other adult students. These students conveyed that what attracted them to the adult accelerated program was the feature of attending class only one night a week. This enabled them to continue to conduct their busy schedules with more consistency. The student non-graduate respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they were attracted to the fast pace of the program. These students confirmed they were interested in accelerated academic programs because these

programs were time and content intense and provided a quick turnaround, allowing them to obtain a degree in a shortened period of time.

Lastly, the majority of these student non-graduates expressed they were attracted to the adult accelerated program because of the adult composition. The student non-graduates did not want to attend courses that would attract younger adults and confirmed that they did not want to be in the same class room with 18 to 20 year old students. An illustration of the common responses by participants regarding what attracted them to an adult accelerated program, are found in Table 29.

Table 29. *Student Non-Graduate Attraction to the Adult Accelerated Program*

Participant	Response
C	“The thing that attracted me the most was the shortened time period to complete the degree program and that it would be with adult learners and not children, as 18 year olds still are.”
D	“...I looked at more of the shortness and the one day of week also for the classes, I didn’t really think more about the composition of the adults versus the teachers it was just I hadn’t had a lot of college and I needed to start at the beginning and this was an easy, it looked like an easy way to get started.”
E	“For me it was truly the speed of it, it was the one night a week, my company was going to pay for it and I could get it out of the way and under my belt for one night a week. The aspect of not being with 18 year olds...there was one thing at least you brought, mine was a management cohort, it brought work experience, when everybody can say we have a real job we’ve been working all this time I don’t know that I would have gotten that from 18 year olds who do you want fries with that is not the same level of work experience that the rest of us all had so I can appreciate that.”
F	“The number one thing that attracted me into the program was the actual opportunity to learn with adults. I see that more, the difference now more than ever, that I’m in a classroom with 20 year olds. The education environment between an adult and a 20 year old, as opposed to, I’m 30 years old, as opposed to an adult

environment. It's a different type of learning environment that I've noticed. In an adult environment we are communicating more, we're talking more, there's just a higher level of respect and a higher level of wanting this from the students to be there, and that was the thing that drew me most was the fact that we had a chance to be with adults, that the teachers in the program understood that they were going to be educating adults and not students and we were going to be treated a little bit differently and a little bit open minded and that actually is what brought me through the door."

**Interview Question 2:** *What expectations did you have as you entered into the adult accelerated program?*

Remarkably, student non-graduate respondents indicated that their expectations were reflective of their high school experience – anxiousness and nervousness. Most of the student non-graduate respondents expressed the belief that they would feel nervous prior to attending their first courses at a college level. These students indicated this supposition was based on their past experience in high school which caused them to experience a level of anxiety as they returned to college for the first time.

Interesting to note, non-graduate student expectations were very self-focused and showed somewhat of a lack of self-confidence in their academic ability. Furthermore, some of these student non-graduates expressed an expectation as to how faculty would lecture and manage a classroom filled with adult learners. Again, this assumption was reflective of their past experience in high school where the instructor would lecture during the entire class and did not provide more engaging learning opportunities. An illustration of the common responses by participants regarding their expectations of the adult accelerated program, are found in Table 30.

Table 30. *Student Non-Graduate Expectations of Adult Accelerated Programs*

Participant	Response
A	"...in my case I already understood some of the expectations that you expect from a college level class and they expect that to maintain you through so granted it was 10 years since I last

stepped in a classroom but again I think the same expectations that I had 10 years ago still applied...anxiousness.”

- C “You know the first night I went to class I was nervous up there, just before 6 like everybody else and you know I was kind “OK what should be expected here?” and we were addressed by our first name and the faculty asked us to address them by first name, we were told this is the cohort you are going to be with for next three years throughout the entire program...”
- F “...thinking back on the very first day and walking in at 6 o’clock at night, I was scared, scared and nervous. I grew up, I work, I’ve been around 40-50-60 year olds my entire life, and so I was a little bit scared to kind of see how the teachers were going to react to us, I immediately flashed back to high school days where the teacher just kind of lectured and told you how it was.”

**Interview Question 3:** *Did the way or manner which faculty taught the courses have any influence on your decision to leave the adult accelerated program?*

Most of the student non-graduates indicated that their leaving the program was not affected by the faculty teaching approach at all. Moreover, the majority of student non-graduates expressed that their decision to leave was based frequently on non-academic reasons. The student non-graduates indicated encountering a variety of obligations outside of the classroom and personal difficulties, all of which influenced their decision to leave the adult accelerated program.

Most of the student non-graduate respondents indicated some faculty created a very positive reaction for their academic experience and encouraged and would assist with their persistence in the adult accelerated program. Yet other student non-graduates indicated that some faculty created a negative impact on their educational experience. An illustration of the common responses by non-graduate participants regarding the way, or manner, which faculty taught the course and influenced their decision to stay in the adult accelerated program are found in Table 31.



Table 31. *Student Non-Graduate Effect on Persistence Based on Teaching Approach*

Participant	Response
B	“The way that the faculty had nothing to do with my leaving the program, I just had to deal with more personal reasons...”
C	“...The faculty had no influence on my decision to leave, the faculty understood that we were all adults working, we all had jobs, families, etc. and that this was in addition and we would have to dedicate specific time to take care of this and they understood that and they understood that it wouldn’t be easy as working adults to add this into our lives and everything else.”
D	“Most my experiences with faculty were positive, encouraging. They encouraged us, got us involved in the class, I remember one class specifically, my psych class, she explained to us, I mean we come in for I don’t know six weeks and there’s this 400 page book and she explained that she would rather take certain chapters and teach us well and have us really absorb that rather than going through the whole book which we really appreciated...”
E	“I would say that 90% of the people I experienced did a very good job, varying levels, they also had jobs so, their jobs, so they weren’t straight out teachers. Three things influenced me to leave, was my company paying for it which they continued to do I just didn’t want to owe them and one of the last teachers I had, and I use the term loosely... The other teachers were like it said varying levels of experience, I thought were very good, some of them had so much hands on, other ones led the class, they interacted, and this guy just, he was all about his personal pulpit and we were captive and had no choice in it. I’m sorry but that was just ... ”
F	“...The teachers are what kept me in the program. I had one teacher I didn’t care for, but if I could start with the good teachers, they were just to me absolutely amazing. They were opposite of what I thought a normal teacher was, and they were opposite of what a teacher was that I’ve experienced in the past. They were respectful with us, they worked with us, they had an earnest honesty to care to get us to succeed in the class. The way that they taught the class was nice. it wasn’t if it wasn’t a lecture style class then it wasn’t, it was interactive...”

**Interview Question 4:** *Describe the facilitators that led you to the decision to leave the adult accelerated program?*

Student non-graduates reported two facilitators led to their decision to leave the adult accelerated program. These student non-graduate respondents indicated their busy schedules were complicated by extraneous obligations such as the requirement to work on group projects outside the classroom.

Equally important, student non-graduates indicated they needed early and frequent encouragement or positive reinforcement from faculty and they found that reinforcement was not forthcoming. They confirmed they wanted to be frequently apprised of their progress and encouraged to continue in their program of study in a timely manner. Table 32 illustrates some of the common responses from participants regarding the facilitators that led them to the decision to leave the adult accelerated program.

Table 32. *Student Non-Graduate Facilitators Who Assisted Adults to Leave the Program*

Participant	Response
E	"... group projects, it's just a respect for our time, which I felt most of them really, really did. It was some of the projects they were, that kind of took up some of our additional outside time... maybe I would suggest has a better role for 18 year olds than it does for 30 somethings..."
F	"...the need to motivate students... Just keep motivating the students, keep talking to them, keep pushing them, keep telling them that they're doing well, keep them apprised of their grades and keep pushing them to keep going to the next class and to make it through..."

**Interview Question 5:** *Describe other problems and barriers excluding the program which lead you to the decision to leave the adult accelerated program?*

Research findings indicated that a majority of the student non-graduates expressed the primary barrier, which led to the decision to leave the adult accelerated program, was the lack of college support for the adult learner. The student non-graduates reported feeling a lack of

assistance and support from college departments such as financial aid, registration and accounts payable. The continual intrusion of administrative type college related barriers added to the already busy life styles of the student non-graduates and was an impetus for the decision to leave the adult accelerated program. Important to note, student graduate participants also expressed a concern in regard to the lack of college support for the adult learner. The barriers articulated by the student non-graduate respondents are illustrated in Table 33.

Table 33. *Student Non-Graduate Barriers to the Adult Accelerated Program*

Participant	Response
A	“The four year school, you can just walk into the financial aid office, the business office at any point, they’ll help you out, versus here you have to make an appointment, get in line, take a number, it’s very traumatic...”
C	“...every time you’d ask for something, I’d go well I have a question about, and they’d go well we can’t find it, and I’d go it’s fast track, OH IT’S FAST TRACK. It was that attitude every time I was on the phone with someone, like OH we can’t help, we don’t know how to answer that question, you have to wait till so and so gets back in the office. It was like this, ok I’m not an alien...Some of the reasons I left, one was the cost. Financial Aid department was not exist in my definition of it, I received absolutely no help, it was go figure it out yourself kind of attitude.”
F	“The number one thing that caused me to leave the program was the administrative side of the school. The school obviously made it apparent that they did not see the value in adult education, they did not see the value of adult students, they were more, it was apparent that they felt like they wanted more of the students. It’s kind of unfair to put the school in that position because there are so many students, so many faculty members that I’ve met here that have been absolutely phenomenal, from the receptionist to the registrar’s office, what the reason behind me blaming the school though and the administrative program is the red tape they have set up in place. It’s just not very forgiving for adult students, they don’t understand that adult students are extremely busy, that we don’t want 15 million emails that we don’t want to have to go through fiery hoops for the financial aid office, the financial aid

office was the 90% reason that I did move forward to my four year university a lot sooner than expected...”

**Interview Question 6:** *Describe what recommendations you can give faculty to assist adult students to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate?*

When given the opportunity to express and describe recommendations for faculty to assist adult learners to stay in accelerated programs, the student non-graduate respondents described the following recommendations that would have assisted them to stay in their degree program: (a) increased faculty feedback and encouragement, (b) faculty expressing empathy and understanding of the adult student, and (c) additional faculty training and development regarding how to teach adult students.

Most of the student non-graduate respondents confirmed that what they wanted and found lacking was encouragement and frequent feedback from faculty. They expressed the need for faculty to have empathy for their current situation of attending college: working and taking care of family responsibilities. Additionally, these respondents indicated there appeared to be a gap in the training and development of faculty and college staff in regard to working with and teaching adult students that needed to be rectified by better mentoring and education of the adult instructors and the support team. The recommendations of the student non-graduates are stated in Table 34.

Table 34. *Student Non-Graduate Recommendations to Faculty*

Participant	Response
A	“...continuous information, updating the students by email or something, follow-up a couple days later, this is what we reviewed, this is what we are actually going to be doing in the next class, something along those lines, keeping them on task...”
B	“One of the things for me would be that they have to have empathy, they have to understand what we’re coming from and walk in our shoes and I think the biggest thing is they got to be, you got to be flexible...in class I don’t need a stick, I need the

carrot out in front of me and reward me. Don't beat me into getting there, I tell you, we've been through life, we've lived life, we've gone through those things that younger people go through when they go to college and those learning experiences and we don't need that. We need to be educated and giving us information and kind of go, just go along those lines, so it, teaching us adults is completely different than teaching kids right out of high school."

D "...to have the teachers do some staff/faculty development as to how to teach adults as opposed to teaching students..."

E "Or how are you doing on your projects, are you having any trouble, and you're half way through the week, do you need, how's it going with your group?"

### **A Priori Themes: Zinn and Knowles**

The study's conceptual framework provides the lens, or view, through which data and information gathered was analyzed. Providing the framework for analyzing and coding the themes were the five educational philosophies as presented by Lorraine Zinn (1999) and the factors that contribute to the persistence and retention of the adult learner based on the six assumptions as espoused by Malcolm Knowles (1980).

#### **A Priori Theme: Zinn Educational Philosophy**

The results derived from the scores of the faculty who took Zinn's (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) were equally distributed between two educational philosophies, progressivism and behaviorism. As faculty participating in the focus group were drawn from among those faculty that had taken the PAEI, the focus group participants reflected the same two educational philosophies, progressivism and behaviorism, as primary beliefs. However, it is important to note that great care was taken in the selection of the faculty focus group participants to ensure that all five of the educational philosophies, as identified by Zinn, were represented either as primary or secondarily identified beliefs.

According to Zinn (1991), the progressivism educational philosophy proposes that learning is best accomplished through a relevant, hands-on, problem solving approach rather than through reinforcement or repetition until the desired behavior is established. This philosophy further purports that learning takes place on an on-going basis and that students have a propensity to solve problems similar to situations they would encounter in real life scenarios. During the focus group, faculty confirmed their initiatives to incorporate work and life experiences into classroom discussions and activities in order to connect course content with practical, real life applications.

Behaviorism, the other educational philosophy selected most often by study participants, is employed in the classroom by the reinforcement or repetition of a desired behavior. According to Zinn (1991), the learner is active in their learning, practicing new behaviors and receiving feedback from faculty. There is a focus on skill reinforcement and competency-based learning with use of behavioral objectives. Faculty, through the utilization of positive and negative reinforcement, shape learning until the learner achieves the desired behavior. Gaining knowledge, according to faculty who embrace the behaviorism philosophy, has more to do with remembering rather than acquiring knowledge, therefore, faculty provide a learning environment which reinforces the desired behavior and/or learning.

During the focus group, faculty commented on utilizing lecture as their primary teaching modality. In addition, they described learning in terms of eliciting good student behaviors, as illustrated by their references to “students should attend all classes, students need to be on time, and be fully prepared for their class.” For the most part, the behaviorism teaching approach is more prevalent in elementary and secondary education than in higher education. However, considering the first two years of post-secondary education is heavily weighted towards

knowledge acquisition in many disciplines, the behaviorism educational philosophy is not an unexpected teaching approach in the college classroom, particularly during the first year of a two-year degree.

It is further understood that the teaching style preferred and, therefore, exhibited by faculty in the classroom is the operational behavior of their value system and their personal teaching philosophy. Interestingly, although the focus group faculty identified their classroom teaching style as either behaviorism or progressivism as the result of completing the PAEI, the focus group discussions were frequently punctuated with aspects and characteristics of the humanism educational philosophy. The faculty reconfirmed their expectation of adult learners was for them to be highly motivated, be self-directed and to assume the responsibility of their learning. Yet, as the group discussion progressed, individual faculty spoke of and shared their personnel beliefs that it was frequently necessary to assist the students however they could to remain in the course. They discussed examples of how they worked with individual students to meet a course assignment and encourage them to stay in the course, or program, and accomplish their personal goals; actions which are truly representative of humanism.

It is apparent there exists a disconnect between the educational philosophies identified by faculty through completing the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) and the actual teaching methodology employed and expressed by those faculty participating in the focus group. Whether this purposeful inclusion of a more humanism teaching philosophy by participants was an affectation brought to bear by group peer pressure during the focus group discussion or a truer reflection of their actual teaching philosophy, as opposed to their survey results, was not clear. However, this is not entirely unexpected as, according to Zinn (1991), faculty processing a combination of educational philosophies is not uncommon.

Through the data obtained from the participant student graduate focus group, these students clearly identified that faculty used teaching approaches in the adult accelerated program that would be described by Zinn (1991) as a combination of the characteristics most associated with behaviorism or progressivism educational philosophies. While the students were not familiar with Zinn, her ascribed educational philosophies or the PAEI, these student graduates repeatedly expressed comments that faculty needed “to be efficient, to provide activities that covered only the necessary course material, and to utilize good time management in the classroom.” Additionally, the student graduates confirmed an expectation for faculty “to provide classroom assignments and discussions that captured real life and work experiences.”

In striking contrast, the student non-graduate focus group participants described elements they felt faculty needed to possess in the classroom reflective of a humanistic approach as identified by the PAEI. From their discussion, the student non-graduates expressed their expectations in phrases such as, “keep motivating the students, keep talking to them; they have to have empathy and they have to understand what we’re coming from.” Student non-graduates wanted faculty to understand how much they have “on their plates” and be more sympathetic and empathetic to their life issues. In essence, it was the faculty’s responsibility to create a comfortable environment in the classroom where they felt supported and experienced less anxiety and therefore gained confidence.

Lastly, both student graduates and student non-graduates felt there was a need for faculty teaching in the adult accelerated programs to generally have a different teaching style and application of course content in regards to the teaching of 18 to 20 year old students and the adult student. In addition, both student graduates and non-graduates expressed a need for faculty to be further trained on how to better teach the adult learner. Pointedly, graduates and student non-



graduates recommended faculty should take classes themselves focusing on improving their teaching skills and knowledge base prior to teaching the adult student.

### **A Priori Theme: Knowles' Adult Learning Assumptions**

Knowles' (1980) six adult learning assumptions were also used as a priori themes to assist in providing a framework for analysis of study data. It was important to include Knowles' adult learning assumptions in this particular study as a complement to Zinn's educational philosophy. Not only does the study attempt to discover the predominate faculty educational philosophy as demonstrated by faculty teaching in adult accelerated academic programs, it was important to discover if they have an understanding of how and in what ways adults learn. This is particularly relevant as the academic programs in which both the faculty and adult students were engaged in this study were in an accelerated format. The faculty focus group respondents affirmed they used four of the Knowles' six adult learning assumptions in their classrooms. These four adult learning assumptions were: (a) adult learners come to class with professional and life experiences which can be useful in their coursework; (b) adult learners are self-directed, (c) motivated to learn; and (d) learning is enhanced with the addition of practical-solution applications to augment the course content. In contrast, the student graduate focus group respondents identified with all six adult learning assumptions espoused by Knowles. Student graduate respondents, however, identified one of the most critical elements facilitating their learning process was their intrinsic motivation to earn a degree. They expressed that regardless of the teaching approach of the faculty or the environment created inside the classroom, they were strongly committed to completing their degree.

Additionally, both faculty and student graduate respondents agreed that students would enhance their learning of course content if the faculty real life business and industry experience

as well as the students' life and work experiences were incorporated into the classroom discussions and activities. Furthermore, both of these groups concurred that the use of practical problem-solving exercises and applications fostered learning of course content. Student graduate respondents reported that real life practical applications of course material was extremely valuable and useful at their place of employment and to their persistence in their program.

By comparison, the student non-graduate focus group participants did not identify with any of the adult learning assumptions espoused by Knowles. This important difference between graduate and non-graduates highlights a striking difference between the two student groups. Student non-graduates were more concerned with elements outside of Knowles' six assumptions which led to their lack of persistence and success. Interestingly, these student non-graduates primarily discussed how and in what ways extrinsic factors were the barriers that led to their decision to leave the adult accelerated program. They articulated that extrinsic barriers overwhelmed any intrinsic motivation they had felt as they entered the adult accelerated program. They also expressed that life obligations and non-support from the college and the faculty was the principle contributors to their decision to quit the adult accelerated program. Furthermore, the student non-graduates also recommended college staff, as well as faculty, should take classes themselves focusing on how to better serve the needs of an adult learner.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter organized and analyzed data which was derived from surveys and the three focus groups purposefully selected in order to obtain their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. The knowledge and data obtained was socially constructed within the context of a focus group, thus enhancing the depth and breadth of understanding the research topic. The data that was elicited from the focus groups and surveys were analyzed to determine how and in what ways

educational philosophies of faculty influence the persistence and graduation of adult learners in a community college adult accelerated program.

The concerns, expectations and barriers reported by both student groups indicated the need for college administrators to create adult friendly services and programs that would assist adult learners in pursuing their academic goals. Both groups of students conveyed the need for college administration to provide training and development for those college departments that assist the adult learner. These adult learners articulated they wanted to be treated with respect and dignity and that they needed rules and services that will meet these needs and concerns. These adult students viewed these services as being respectful of their busy schedules, needs and existing experiences.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This exploratory and descriptive study provides information to improve the understanding of the role of faculty educational philosophy on the successful achievement of adult learners as measured by persistence and graduation. Increasing faculty understanding of their educational philosophies and how this philosophy impacts their teaching styles will better serve adult students. These insights also afford the information needed by community colleges to create a positive adult learning environment as they develop, implement, and improve adult accelerated courses and programs and recruit faculty to teach in them.

The views and perspectives of the three focus groups provided rich, thick data from individuals who had extensive knowledge of background and context of adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs and faculty expectations of the adult learners. Their perspective furnished valuable insights for community college administrators to use as they conceptualize adult accelerated academic programs and hire faculty to teach adult learners. This study sought to increase the knowledge which community college administrators could utilize to implement programs for faculty and administrative staff development to promote and support adult learning. By instituting these professional development programs, educational environments will be created which will in turn motivate adult students to persist and complete their degrees.

The concluding chapter includes the following: (a) brief overview of chapters 1 through 5; (b) summary of the findings followed by implications for practice, organized by research question; (c) the conclusion; (d) presentation of the Wajler adult accelerated program improvement model; and (e) recommendations for further research.

### **Brief Overview of Chapters 1 – 5**

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the background and contextual issues concerning the relationship of faculty in regard to the persistence and graduation of adult learners in accelerated academic programs. The purpose of the study and the driving questions were also presented. A brief review of the literature presented the conceptual framework which situated the study. An overview of the methodology and research design was outlined to establish a clearer understanding of the study and subsequent analysis of the findings. Definitions of relevant terms were included to create an unambiguous understanding of the research.

Chapter 2 presented the literature review which introduced the context in which the research was situated. The conceptual framework that served as the research lens as well as the structure for the data analysis was also included. The review of the literature began with an overview of the historical implications of community colleges and their role in meeting the needs of adult students. The conceptual framework for the study is the interrelationship of Lorraine Zinn's (1991) five educational philosophies with Malcolm Knowles' (1980) six assumptions of adult learners.

Chapter 3 set forth the methodology utilized in the study. This study was a qualitative case study situated in the interpretive paradigm. The methodology outlined the selection criteria for three groups of participants involved in the accelerated adult academic programs at the single site: faculty, student graduates, and student non-graduates. A sequential data collection approach was used with both groups completing surveys prior to participation in focus groups. Two limitations to the study were identified: (a) the case sample was limited to a single community college and (b) participants could have selective memory or limited recall. A consistent and methodical process was employed to establish transparency of the research

process and credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations were addressed as well as information regarding the researcher as a research instrument.

In Chapter 4, an audit trail of data collection methods and protocols used in the study were presented. Faculty and student participant selection protocol and its execution process were explained. To ensure consistency of the data collection process, both faculty and student pilot focus groups were conducted. Demographic surveys completed by faculty and both student graduates and student non-graduates were sorted, coded, summarized and displayed in a manageable format. The Zinn (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) was taken by faculty and served as an analytical lens for the purpose of coding and subsequent analysis of appropriate data.

In chapter 5, data were organized and analyzed from the three focus group responses, resulting in the findings. Data elicited from the focus groups were divided into two sections. The first section organized and analyzed data attained from the responses of the three focus groups. The second section provided a summative analysis of information and data from the two a priori themes: (a) Zinn's (1991) five educational philosophies and (b) the six assumptions of adult learners as espoused by Malcolm Knowles (1980). The rich, thick data elicited from the focus group transcripts was analyzed and provided the basis for research findings, conclusion and suggested implications for community colleges.

### **Findings and Implications**

The following pages include the findings of the study and implications of the findings pertaining to adult accelerated programs at the community college level. In addition, this section provides an explanation of the Wajler adult accelerated program improvement model and includes an explanation of each component of the model: (a) faculty professional development;

(b) administrative staff professional development; and (c) student orientation for adult learners.

The study concludes with recommendations for further research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influences adult learners in community college accelerated programs.

### **Research Driving Question 1:**

*How and in what ways do the educational philosophies of faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs influence student degree completion?*

Faculty teaching in an adult accelerated program completed the Zinn (1991) survey to discover their educational philosophy which is a direct reflection of their teaching approach. After completing the survey, a representative sample of these faculty were invited to join in a focus group for a more in-depth discussion of their teaching approach relative to the adult learner. It was evident from the faculty focus group discussions, the majority of the faculty were not aware of their educational philosophy, though they felt the assessment was an accurate reflection of their teaching approach. Interestingly, faculty participants communicated that after taking the Zinn assessment, they had gained greater insights regarding their teaching approach.

The faculty acknowledged that they viewed adult learners differently and instinctively used more andragogical techniques with the adult learner than the traditional age (18 to 24 years) student. Even though most faculty participants articulated they were not aware of their educational philosophy, most felt they had developed a rather eclectic teaching approach, incorporating elements and attributes of different teaching styles associated with the educational philosophies espoused by Zinn (1991). They felt that incorporating elements from several of

Zinn's five educational philosophies has allowed them to develop and use numerous "tools in their tool box" to adjust to the adult learners' needs.

To provide a more comprehensive picture and better understanding of how the faculty teaching approach influences persistence and ultimate degree completion in an adult accelerated program, focus groups of the student graduates and those students who did not complete the degree requirements were also completed. It was vital to hear from both of these student groups regarding their perceptions of faculty influence in order to gain relevant insights into adult learners' needs in the classroom. Clearly, student graduates did not feel all faculty, who teach in the adult accelerated program, were "effective" teachers. Student graduates articulated how some faculty acknowledged adults had work and job experiences that could be woven into the fabric of the course discussions and activities leading to a more advantageous learning environment. Student graduates strongly felt adult learners react more positively, learn more, and relate better to faculty who include real life examples and practical knowledge into the classroom. These findings paralleled three of the six adult learning assumptions espoused by Malcolm Knowles. According to Knowles (1980) adult learners are self-motivated; they have a wealth of life and professional experiences to bring into the classroom; and learning is enhanced with the application of knowledge to real life situations. Though these student graduates seemed to possess a strong personal desire to complete their degree requirements and graduate, they also felt that faculty and their classroom teaching approach was influential in their persistence and subsequent graduation. However, this feeling was not shared by the student non-graduates.

In contrast, student non-graduates indicated the faculty teaching approach had little to no effect on their persistence (and thus degree completion) from an adult accelerated program. Contrary to the student graduates, the student non-graduates shared how nervous and anxious



they felt prior to starting their academic program. The student non-graduates indicated encountering a variety of obligations outside of the classroom and personal difficulties, all of which influenced their decision to withdraw from the accelerated program. Student non-graduates also felt some college services and regulations presented difficulties for them, adding to their decision to withdraw from the program.

It was important to recognize from the student's point of view what faculty and the community college can do to enhance student experiences with any adult accelerated program. Assessment and continuous improvements in the college's management of these types of programs and the faculty teaching approaches can be beneficial for the adult learner. It was apparent from the responses of the student graduates and student non-graduates in this study that there is a need for faculty to improve the teaching approach they employ with adult students in accelerated programs.

**Implications of Findings for Community Colleges.** While the features of accelerated programs in community colleges may initially attract the adult learner, participants in this study felt it is the teaching ability as well as the content expertise of faculty which keeps students enrolled. How faculty conduct their classes and what takes place in the classroom serve as predominate retention factors, especially for the adult learner. To gain insights into how to better teach adult learners, faculty must achieve a further understanding as to the creation of a classroom learning environment specific for adult learners.

Teachers choosing to teach in adult accelerated programs must be aware that their teaching style, assignments and class interactions need to be more tailored and applicable to the adult student. Galbraith (2004) challenges the adult educator to develop an appropriate setting for learners that allows for full engagement in learning and encourages persistence. To meet this

challenge, the community college adult educators must be willing to consistently evolve and develop their teaching approach to accommodate the needs and expectations of the adult learner. As faculty become more aware of their teaching style and incorporate a more adult centered approach into the classroom, adult learners become more engaged in their educational process. Therefore, the need for faculty training and ongoing activities that focuses on the improvement of faculty teaching would enhance the learning environment for adults and ultimately encourage persistence and retention.

Specific and frequent professional development programs, offered at community colleges, should be required for faculty teaching the adult learner. In addition, to assist with establishing a creative and innovative faculty, the formation of faculty learning communities can enable teachers to grow and improve in their teaching strategies and techniques specific to adult accelerated programs. These professional development opportunities can provide faculty multiple avenues to: (a) gain an awareness of their educational philosophy; (b) better understand how their educational philosophy relates to the persistence and success of the adult learner; and (c) develop classroom teaching strategies designed to enhance learning by the adult student.

In addition, community colleges must recognize and understand that adult students, particularly those enrolled in accelerated programs, have different needs than students 18 to 24 years old. To better serve adult learners, accommodations in many of the student services areas are required for this growing student population. All students want more convenience related to the college's student services. Adults want more streamlined student services which are available when their classes are scheduled, which means administrative staff and departments are available on the week-ends and in the evenings at both the main and satellite campuses where the majority of their classes are often held. Students conveyed the need to have their issues and

concerns addressed as efficiently as possible. As many adult students have work and life obligations making it very difficult, if not impossible, to get to the college campus during the day, Monday through Friday, improvements in student services can assist student persistence. Not only can these accommodations and improvements lead to an enhanced provision of services for adult students, but for all students.

### **Research Driving Question 2:**

*What are adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching strategies in community college adult accelerated programs?*

The students in this research reported a wide range of responses regarding their expectations of the faculty teaching strategies in community college adult accelerated programs. These common expectations regarding the faculty teaching strategies include: (a) faculty would teach in a fast pace and intense format; (b) faculty would use effective time management of course content; and (c) faculty would create an adult friendly environment utilizing the adult learners' business experience. Furthermore, these students reported several expectations that related to adult accelerated program development. The common themes related to program development for the adult learner include: (a) attend only one night a week; and (b) provide a preplanned sequence of courses which guides them to completion of their degree.

Study participants' first expectation, regarding faculty teaching strategies, involved the intensity of the academic program which they saw to be reflective of the accelerated pace and format associated with the program. Students expressed concern that they would become overwhelmed with the course content and explained how difficult it would be to keep pace with the various assignments required within a condensed time period. However, these students confirmed they were interested in accelerated academic programs and would endure the fast pace

of courses because these programs provided a quick turnaround, allowing them to obtain a degree in a shortened period of time.

Secondly, adult learners expected faculty would display good time management of course material. Their expectation was that faculty would be efficient in the classroom and would stay on track in order to cover as much course content as necessary to meet the course student learning outcomes. However, these students strongly felt their workplace experience should be integrated into the classroom activities and discussions, allowing the faculty to cover more advance course concepts. What they did not want was for faculty to focus on the basics or foundations of the course. All expressed their workplace experience had provided them with “the basics” and expressed that a repeat of it was simply redundant and a waste of time. Additionally, adult learners anticipated faculty would create a classroom environment which would include their business expertise. These students also expressed they related better to those faculty who brought real life, practical knowledge into the classroom. They strongly voiced the need for faculty to create a positive environment which promoted a desire to learn. They suggested providing interesting course activities and assignments applicable to their work, which in turn motivated them to persist and complete their degree.

The students in this research also reported several expectations specifically related to the organization of adult accelerated programs. These students expected to attend an adult friendly accelerated program which allowed them to attend only one day a week to accommodate their complicated life style and work obligations. They expected to get support from faculty and the college administration to assist them in their academic experience. Additionally, the student participants in this study expected an accelerated academic program would provide a preplanned path of courses to completing their degree requirements. They articulated the importance of

having a known sequence of courses when they enrolled in the academic program which would guarantee placement or a seat in each course and lead to degree completion.

**Implications of Findings for Community Colleges.** The implications of these findings are twofold: (a) the first series of implications directly addresses adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching strategies, and (b) the second series of implications focus on the design of adult accelerated programs within a community college setting.

The implications of the findings for community colleges associated with faculty teaching strategies include: (a) provide professional development opportunities for faculty of adult accelerated academic programs in order to develop effective teaching strategies and better time management of course material; and (b) create an adult friendly environment which incorporates a variety of interactive course activities and assignments. As conveyed in the research findings, one factor that consistently attracts the adult learner to attend college is the condensed time of the accelerated academic program. Yet the factor that attracts the adult learner, the fast pace of the courses, also can become a major barrier to completing their degree. The condensed course time of accelerated adult programs can provide extreme pressure on adults and can be difficult for them to keep the pace with the coursework. Faculty would benefit from specific professional development offerings centered on these two areas of effectively developing accelerated teaching methods and effectively managing course content. Professional development activities can provide various opportunities for faculty to learn how to better facilitate accelerated courses and in preparing syllabi that effectively converts a traditional 16 week course into a 6 to 8 week accelerated course. Secondly, faculty also need to learn various ways to create an adult friendly environment in their classrooms. Since many adult learners have an abundance of life and

business experience, teaching strategies which incorporate student experiences into an interactive and dynamic classroom can simultaneously foster learning and application of knowledge.

Additionally, community college administrators must recognize that though the design of the adult accelerated academic programs can attract students to enroll, these types of programs must be constructed in a way that facilitates the adult learners' persistence and graduation. The implications of the study findings strongly suggest community colleges should create accelerated, fast paced degree programs that meet once a week and publish a pre-planned sequence of courses aimed toward degree completion. Therefore, colleges should offer accelerated courses in degree programs which are held on a consistent evening one time a week each term (even on weekends) to accommodate the adult students' busy schedules and allow them to plan their lives. Additionally, an adult friendly academic program should present a preplanned sequence of courses aimed toward degree completion. The adult student would select a program of study and the courses would be offered to adults only in a cohort format. As the college starts new cohorts in the same degree program, those students who had to "stop-out" of the previous cohort would have opportunity to "step back in" to another cohort.

Lastly, as a general foundation to continued retention and graduation of these adult students, community college student support services must be re-evaluated from the perspective of these students. College support services for the adult learner must be user-friendly and accommodating to those that may lack self-confidence associated with returning to college. Student support services from financial aid to tutoring must be available when these students are on campus to eliminate barriers to degree completion.

### **Research Driving Question 3:**

*What are faculty expectations of adult learners enrolled in community college adult accelerated programs?*

The faculty participant expectations of adult learners centered around five main themes. These common expectations regarding the adult learner include: (a) comes to the classroom with a richness of work and life experiences; (b) are well informed about the program demands; (c) are self-directed; (d) are motivated; and (e) learn best with practical solutions and business oriented applications of course content. Interestingly, most of these expectations support the assumptions of adult learning championed by Malcolm Knowles (1980).

Faculty conveyed that the adult learner brings a myriad of life and business experience to the classroom which is beneficial and facilitates their learning. However, many faculty hoping to impart to students everything they know about a subject and still operating under the premise of what content is covered in a 16 week course, will use a teaching approach that is primarily a lecture format. Faculty can impart more information to adult learners by fostering an active engagement in the adult learning process which can enhance learning objectives by infusing course content with student experiences and faculty expertise.

Creating a learning atmosphere using interactive teaching techniques with rigorous, critical reflective learning applications allows the adult learner to immediately apply theory and content. Faculty from this research expressed their belief that enhancement of classroom learning by adults was done by integrating relevant course theory with life and professional experiences. Thus, this inclusion of a more contextual component to the learning process leads to increased student participation and persistence.

Another faculty expectation, of adults enrolled in an accelerated program, was that students understand the special demands of these intense short courses. From the faculty point of view, if a student enrolls in an accelerated academic program, they did so agreeing to the fast pace of the courses and the program. Furthermore, faculty expressed the importance of adult students being well informed about the number of hours needed to prepare for class, the condensed turnaround time for projects and papers, and the amount of reading required in a short time period in order for them to meet the same course objectives as traditional 16 week courses.

The findings of faculty expectations of adults also confirmed two key assumptions espoused by Malcolm Knowles (1980). The first assumption is adult learners are self-directed and the second is their readiness to learn is dependent upon their need or motivation. Faculty participants articulated that most adult learners, currently enrolled in their courses, have reached a specific level of employment in a corporate or business setting (such as mid-management) and cannot advance in their careers without obtaining further credentials from institutes of higher education. Therefore, seeking a degree is a primary goal and motivation of these individuals. It was this strong need to obtain a degree for career advancement, or to transition into a new career, that adult learners exhibited and faculty saw in these students.

Faculty did recognize the challenge of creating the optimal classroom learning environment for the adult learner. It is important for faculty to understand that most adults need practical, real life application of knowledge, fostered by the use of a variety of teaching strategies and techniques. Findings from this research concur with research by Demaris and Kritsonis (2008). Their research found that an adult learning environment needs to be designed to provide relevant, positive experiences through the adoption of various learning strategies which incorporate relevant practical applications. Faculty who understand and implement a



variety of appropriate teaching methods, relevant to adult learners, greatly influence the retention, persistence and thus graduation of adult learners.

**Implications of Findings for Community Colleges.** It is a difficult endeavor for community colleges to create and provide quality adult accelerated programs that meet all the needs of adult learners. Yet, it is imperative for community colleges to create academic programs which foster the type of learning environment that enables these self-directed adult learners to remain motivated and feel capable of successfully learning and obtaining a degree.

The research findings suggest community colleges offering adult accelerated programs should encourage faculty to move beyond the pedagogical belief that learning is a mere acquisition of new knowledge best done in a lecture format towards the andragogical perspective more conducive to adult learners. This type of learning environment in a community college would enhance the learning experience for the adult learner, leading to improved persistence, retention, and graduation.

Many adult learners have not been part of an academic setting for 10 to 20 years. As the adult student returns to and progresses through their education, practical real life application of the course material is needed to enhance their comprehension of course content. In meeting the challenge of creating an adult focused academic program, community college administrators and program directors need to first consider what would enhance the andragogical approach of faculty teaching in adult accelerated programs. Teaching effectively in these types of accelerated programs can be a daunting experience yet very rewarding when successfully done. Directors of accelerated programs must assist faculty in creating a learning atmosphere using interactive teaching techniques which allows the adult learner to apply course theory and content to real-life situations. This can be accomplished in a number of creative ways.

Once faculty are hired to teach in the adult accelerated program, their teaching approach would be greatly enhanced by attending professional development opportunities to improve their understanding the adult learner. Some of the topics of these professional development activities must include the following: (a) developing flexible teaching strategies to promote creation of an interactive classroom; (b) infusing andragogical teaching modalities into the adult learner classroom; (c) adapting teaching techniques to augment course content with practical applications relevant to their jobs; and (d) understanding the self-directed learning style and motivation of adult learners.

In addition, providing frequent opportunities for faculty to meet as a group to share their experiences and insights can serve as a vehicle to improve their classroom teaching. Collaborative activities, such as extending an invitation for another faculty to “guest lecture” on a specific topic can foster faculty cooperation. By encouraging collaborative opportunities, faculty would expand and improve their expertise of the andragogical approach. Improvement of teaching in the adult accelerated program can in turn facilitate persistence and graduation of the adult learner.

Lastly, the adult learner would greatly benefit from being well counseled about the accelerated adult program. Gaining an understanding of the level of commitment and the required academic expectations would go far in assisting to mitigate student anxiety as they return to college. This could be fostered by attending a student orientation which would focus on students’ gaining insights to enhance their understanding of: (a) what exactly is an accelerated academic program; (b) what is required of students in these types of programs; and (c) how to “keep-up” with the course assignments.

**Research Driving Question 4:**

*What recommendations do adult learners have for faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs?*

Insights and information gained from this study, regarding the needs of adult learners, are important to faculty and administrators of community college adult accelerated academic programs. The views and perspectives of these students reflect many of the salient features of adult accelerated programs that can be used by community college admissions to attract enrollments. Additionally, the insight gained can assist in the hiring and professional development of faculty and staff, which in turn supports and fosters retention and graduation of adults. Study student participants offered three recommendations to assist faculty in improving their classroom teaching strategies of adult learners. These three recommendations include: (a) provide frequent communication and feedback to students regarding their progress in the adult accelerated program; (b) recognize the demands and multiple obligations of the adult learner which stresses the need for faculty to be respectful of their out of classroom time; and (c) utilize their own professional expertise and experience in the classroom to enhance the understanding of course content to combine a practical perspective with the theoretical perspective.

It was evident from the expressed views and perspectives of many adult students that there is a strong need for frequent faculty encouragement and feedback regarding their progress throughout the course and the program. These students, though adults, exhibit the same need as other students, the need for consistent validation of their progress for their ability to be successful. This finding supports the research of Rendón's theory of validation (2009). Rendón proposed that adult students want faculty initiated interactions that showed their belief in the adult student's ability to be successful. Her research found when students felt their needs were

validated (recognized, respected, and seen as valued) they were more likely to remain in adult accelerated programs.

Furthermore, these adult students wanted faculty to be cognizant of their busy and complex life styles and for faculty to express more empathy and understanding of course assignments as it relates to multiple competing responsibilities in their life. These adult students further reported that their busy schedules made it difficult to find the time to complete group assignments outside the classroom. Although these adult learners recognized the importance of group assignments, they emphasized how difficult it was to complete these types of assignments as well as attend to their family responsibilities and work obligations. Interestingly, they expressed how their difficulty in completing these group assignments only increased their stress level and did not add value to their learning experience.

Lastly, the students in this research recommended that faculty utilize their own professional knowledge and insights from business to demonstrate practical applications of the course content. The adult learners felt that faculty bringing examples into the classroom from corporate America, business and industry settings would provide a more contextual learning environment. Student participants also felt when faculty infused current industry knowledge into the classroom it increased the faculty credibility.

Furthermore, these students reported several recommendations that related specifically to the support services intended for adult focused accelerated programs. These recommendations included: (a) improve the customer service provided by college departments for the adult learner, and (b) establish admissions standards more accommodating to the adult learner. The overall consensus of these students was that the services provided from student service personnel, was poor at best and a continuous imposition. Examples of this were the endless

transfer of their phone calls from one department to another department or another staff member to another to handle their situation. This added to a strong perception of the general lack of assistance for adult students from a variety of college departments such as financial aid, registration, and accounts payable. This perceived inattention of college personnel caused these students unnecessary difficulties which was the catalyst in many cases for their decision to leave the adult accelerated program. It was strongly advised that the student service staff from a variety of different departments be provided training in order to become more attuned to adult learners' needs and improve their service.

Adult students also felt the current admission requirements of passing the reading, math and English placement assessments, prior to acceptance into the adult accelerated program, created an overwhelming barrier. These adult learners articulated the need to have more accommodating admission requirements that would better reflect their knowledge and skill level for admission into an accelerated program.

**Implications of Findings for Community Colleges.** The implications of these findings for community colleges are twofold. The first series of implications directly concentrates on the classroom and the need for training and on-going development of faculty teaching in adult accelerated programs. The second series of implications focuses on the training and on-going development of support service personnel to better accommodate the adult learner.

The first classroom implication for faculty teaching in adult accelerated programs is associated with the need of students for continuous feedback and communication. As a result of the fast pace of the accelerated program, these adult learners conveyed the need for early and frequent constructive feedback and communication by faculty. Faculty would benefit from professional development opportunities which would provide the framework to enhance their

understanding of the needs of adult learners in accelerated programs. These activities should be designed to improve the awareness of faculty of the adult student's need for consistent assessment of student learning and designed to provide constructive feedback on a timely basis. Information could include how to incorporate a variety of these types of activities into their syllabus and therefore, their classroom.

The second classroom implication relates to faculty recognizing the demands and multiple obligations of the adult learner. Adult learners repeatedly conveyed that their busy schedule made it difficult to participate in classroom assignments such as group projects which were designed to be completed outside of the classroom. Professional development programs could provide insights regarding the multiple family responsibilities and the variety of job obligations applicable to the adult student in an accelerated program. Additionally, professional development opportunities could provide faculty examples of the diverse ways to integrate group projects into the classroom instead of assigning the exercise to groups to complete outside of the classroom. Faculty could utilize a method of providing lectures which are short in duration but provide high contextual knowledge followed by group exercises and conclude with a critical thinking reflective exercise.

The last implication related to faculty teaching was the need for faculty to utilize their own professional knowledge, expertise, and experience in the classroom. These adult learners confirmed that when faculty provided pragmatic problem-solving applications in the classroom their learning experience was stimulated and contextual understanding was promoted. Another focus of faculty professional development programs could address not only the value of infusing theory with practical, real life applications but also provide various examples specifically

applicable to the course content. This would ensure that the course student learning outcomes (SLOs) would be met.

Additionally, the adult learners addressed issues that have implications relevant to student support service and administrative staff. These adult learners articulated the need for more service hours, better access by phone of knowledgeable student service personnel, and availability to complete transactions online. Staff from a variety of college departments such as admissions, financial aid, registration and accounts payable would greatly benefit from professional development training which would foster their understanding of the needs of adult learners and better customer service. The research findings suggest that adult learners felt a lack of assistance and support from many college departments, resulting in additional stress and needless barriers to their college experience. Providing opportunities for relevant student services and administrative staff to engage in open honest discussions regarding the needs of adults would enhance a better understanding of these students. In general, improved customer service simply benefits all students.

Students in the study felt there was a great need to establish adult entrance requirements to the accelerated programs that would better accommodate the adult learner. These students conveyed that the current admissions requirements, which use standardized college placement tests, were not reflective of their knowledge and only added barriers to their educational objectives.

Community college administrators could make available a pilot trial of modified admission requirements for the adult students in accelerated programs that are more flexible or completely eliminate these entrance requirements. Perhaps the use of a variety of tools, such as portfolios, writing assignments or other non-standardized testing strategies, could be tried and assessed to

demonstrate the potential student's knowledge and skill level for admission into an accelerated program. When completed, the results of this pilot trial would be reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness in the admissions process for students in accelerated academic programs.

**Research Driving Question 5:**

*What recommendations does faculty have for adult learners to enhance their persistence and graduation in community college adult accelerated programs?*

The views and perspectives of faculty which were extrapolated from the findings indicate faculty felt it was incumbent upon them to provide the tools that allow adult learners to persist and reach their academic objectives. Faculty did believe their educational philosophy does make an impact on the adult learners' persistence and that understanding their educational philosophy would be helpful for faculty in determining the best approach to reach adults in the classroom. They believed the educational needs of adults are different from non-adults and, therefore, classroom teaching of adult students should support these differences. They conveyed the importance of providing a classroom environment to better involve and engage the adult learner and how this requires a more sophisticated approach than teaching traditional age students (18 to 24 years).

Further findings validate how post-secondary classroom teaching, for these faculty in adult accelerated academic programs, remains focused on the amount of course content needing to be covered and does not recognize the vital component of how teachers teach, which is to say, the teaching modalities they use. Zinn (1991) feels that adult educators have both the freedom and the responsibility to (a) establish student learning objectives, (b) develop learning activities to meet these objectives, and (c) to continually assess the learning experience. However, Zinn



questions whether teachers connected the course content, student learning outcomes and learning assignments with the experiences and needs of adult learners.

Faculty recommended some specific teaching strategies that would support an adult learning atmosphere, which in turn would enhance the persistence of adult learners. These suggestions included: (a) acknowledging and encouraging adult learners for their aspiration to pursue and attain a degree; and (b) creating innovative, interactive activities into the classroom rather than relying on lecturing.

The findings advocate the need for faculty to discover ways to acknowledge and encourage adults who have a desire to gain better employment or possibly advance to positions of greater responsibility through pursuing and attaining a degree. Faculty acknowledged that many adult students initially bypassed the opportunity to obtain a degree and went immediately into the workforce. Now these adult students have discovered they needed to pursue a post-secondary degree to leverage a better workplace opportunity. Moreover, these findings revealed and confirmed how classroom experiences play a significant part in an adult student's capacity to learn, which in turn influences the persistence and retention of the adult learner. Faculty expressed a need to create and employ innovative and interactive classroom activities for a more adult friendly environment which adopts a variety of collaborative learning strategies and modalities targeted toward adult learners' needs.

**Implications of Findings for Community Colleges.** The quest to understand the characteristics and needs of the adult learner has become paramount in higher education. This research has placed importance on understanding the dynamics of the faculty-student relationship in the classroom as it relates to persistence and ultimately graduation of adult learners, particularly those in accelerated academic programs. This goal can be facilitated by

providing faculty a more comprehensive picture and better understanding of how to teach adults in accelerated programs.

The implications of the findings suggest community colleges offering adult accelerated programs need to provide training and professional development opportunities for faculty to define and establish teaching approaches that would better reflect the needs of the adult learner. Community college administrators need to provide faculty opportunities to gain an awareness and understanding of their personal educational philosophy and how it fosters the persistence and success of adult learners. Therefore, directors of adult accelerated academic programs should provide the means for faculty teaching, or thinking about teaching, in these types of programs to understand their personal educational philosophy as well as adapt their teaching approach specifically for adult learners.

Additionally, these professional development and continuous engagement opportunities can provide faculty with the tools and strategies to enhance the adult learning experience. For example, these programs can focus on how to incorporate Knowles' (1980) adult learning assumptions into the student learning assignments for their particular course. The use of creative and innovative teaching approaches can facilitate learning by adult students, making the classroom experience fun and interesting, and the course content more applicable to their work. Therefore, faculty professional development programs could consist of several courses focusing on the needs and expectations of the adult learner and strategies to create an adult-centered learning environment.

In addition, directors of adult accelerated programs could establish faculty "teaching communities". This could be done by hosting two or three meetings each term for faculty to share their "best practice" teaching strategies. Also, faculty identified as excellent teachers of

adult students in accelerated programs could serve as mentors to other faculty who are new to teaching in these types of programs. The goal is to establish an adult friendly classroom environment in community college adult accelerated programs which fosters student persistence and graduation.

### **Conclusion**

The research findings suggest a myriad of ideas to enhance the persistence and retention of the adult learner. The concerns, expectations and barriers expressed by both student groups point to the need for college administrators to create adult friendly programs and services that would assist adult learners in the persistence of their academic objectives. Insights vetted from this study suggest the following areas for improvement: (a) need for faculty development programs to gain knowledge regarding adult learners; (b) need for administrative staff development opportunities to improve understanding of adults in order to provide better support services for adult learners; and (c) provide orientation opportunities for adult learners to gain insights regarding academic expectations prior to entering an adult accelerated program.

Both student groups expressed the importance for faculty to be knowledgeable regarding the needs of the adult learner. Students suggested the need for professional development of faculty to enhance their understanding of how adults learn (Knowles' six learning assumptions) so that course content could be crafted to reflect real life business and industry experience into interactive classroom discussions and activities. Moreover, these students articulated the need to have administrative staff, in departments across the college, become more knowledgeable of the needs and issues relevant to the adult learner by reducing any perceived roadblocks and by providing more timely assistance, thus enabling adult learners to graduate and attain their personal academic goals.

Lastly, faculty felt the adult learner would greatly benefit from attending a student orientation which would focus on gaining insights to enhance their understanding of an accelerated academic program. Gaining an understanding of the level of commitment and the required academic expectations would considerably reduce the level of anxiety and fear that adult students may experience and better prepare them for success in courses and in the program.

The need to create and offer academic services and programs to accommodate the adult student will continue to be in demand. Competition is growing significantly between community colleges and private and for profit higher education institutions that are extremely aggressive with adult recruitment and program offerings. These institutions are offering a wide spectrum of academic programs, delivery methods, services, and financial packages to attract adult students. As a result, adult learners have been willing to spend two to three times the tuition cost to attend private institutions which deliver instruction in a true accelerated format with faculty who bring industry background and understand adult learning styles.

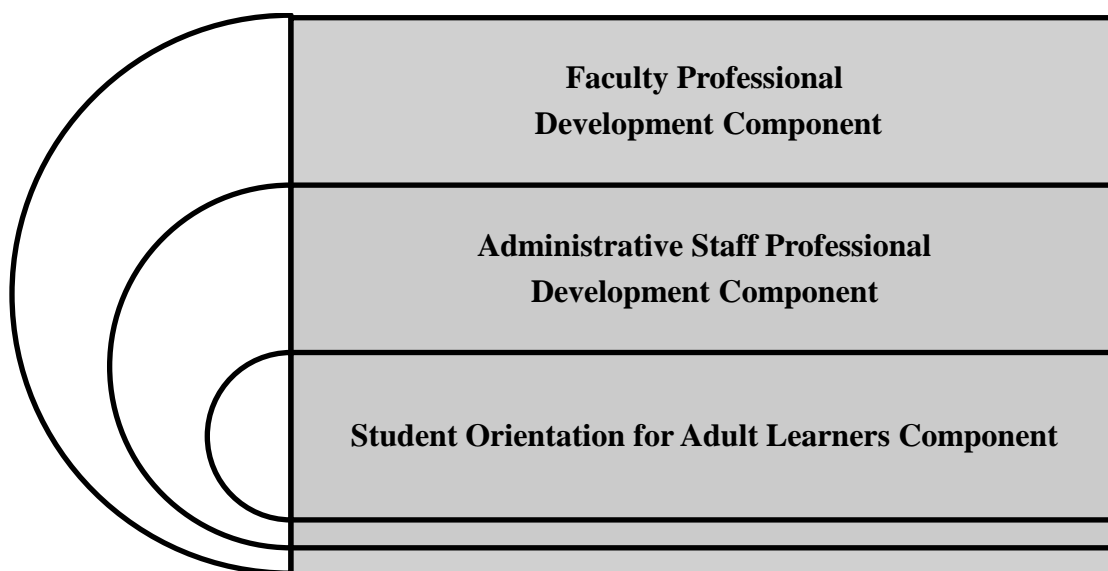
Community colleges have an opportunity to gain significant market share of the adult population over the next few years. But, how do colleges undertake this endeavor and increase adult student retention and graduation rates? Therefore, a model to enhance adult retention and improve graduation rates of adults in community college adult accelerated academic programs is needed. The Wajler Adult accelerated program improvement model offers a framework to build and assess an adult accelerated educational environment, thus enhancing the persistence and ultimate graduation of the adult learner. The focus of the Wajler model is to provide the framework for creating an excellent adult learner program which is delivered in an accelerated format and marked by knowledgeable faculty who understand how

to teach adults. In addition, the Wajler model recommends that student support services be modified to meet the demands and needs of the adult student.

### **Wajler Adult Accelerated Program Improvement Model**

The Wajler model provides a framework to improve the quality of adult accelerated programs offered by higher education institutions. This model can assist community college leaders as they conceptualize, develop, implement, and assess adult accelerated academic programs. It is a model based upon the research findings, current literature, and the researcher's expertise and experience. Three essential model components are key to a quality adult accelerated program: (a) faculty professional development; (b) administrative staff professional development; and (c) student orientation for adult learners. Figure 2 illustrates the inter-relationship of these three model components.

*Figure 2. Wajler Adult Accelerated Program Improvement Model*



### **First Model Component: Faculty Professional Development**

In meeting the challenge of creating the optimal educational environment for the adult learner, it is important to have faculty that are not only knowledgeable in their discipline but know how to teach adults. Most faculty are experts in their content area yet have little, if any, exposure to the art of teaching, especially teaching adult learners in accelerated programs. The Wajler model's first component provides for faculty professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of how to better teach adult learners. The faculty development component of this model emphasizes three important phases for success:

- (a) hire faculty who are cognizant of or are willing to identify their educational philosophies and demonstrate adult teaching strategies in the classroom;
- (b) provide professional development opportunities for faculty to gain insights and a better understanding of the needs of adult learners and optimize an adult-centered learning environment (using Malcolm Knowles' (1980) six assumptions as a foundation); and
- (c) create ongoing faculty-student engagement opportunities to establish a learning environment which encourages communication, dialogue, and an exchanges of ideas.

The first phase of the faculty development component focuses on hiring faculty for the adult accelerated program. This first phase consists of two activities which are designed to assist in hiring faculty to teach in an accelerated academic program for adult learners: (a) faculty candidate would take the Zinn (1991) Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI), and (b) faculty candidate would be required to conduct a 20 to 30 minute interactive teaching demonstration.

To gain deeper insights into how to better meet the teaching needs of these adult learners, faculty must be aware of their educational philosophy as espoused by Zinn (1991). As faculty

become aware of their educational philosophy, they gain insight regarding how it facilitates or hinders learning by the adult student. Taking the Zinn PAEI allows faculty to identify their educational philosophy. It is one's educational philosophy which guides the teaching style and classroom practices.

Secondly, the faculty candidate would present a 20 to 30 minute interactive teaching demonstration. This demonstration would not only show the candidate's knowledge of the content area, but would also illustrate their teaching style and ability as it relates to the adult learner. Faculty candidates would be rated on how well they incorporate some (if not all) of the Knowles' six assumptions into their classroom. For example, reviewers would evaluate the demonstration as to how well the faculty provided a practical, real life and interactive application of the content into the classroom. Based on the research by Malcolm Knowles (1980) and others, faculty need to incorporate adult learner' principles into their teaching practices, leading to improved student cognition and metacognition as well as retention rates. Faculty would be selected to teach in an adult accelerated program once they have successfully conducted a traditional interview and successfully demonstrated their ability to engage adults in an interactive teaching modality in compliance with the institution's hiring policies.

In the Wajler model's second phase of the faculty professional development component, the college assists faculty to gain a better foundation regarding teaching adults by providing faculty development opportunities on campus. Faculty would attend a number of regularly scheduled professional development offerings based on Knowles' (1980) six assumptions. These opportunities would center on specific and relevant topics such as: (a) how adults learn; (b) incorporating various learning assignments with relevance to student's employment or interests; and (c) gaining insight into teaching strategies to create adult-centered classroom learning

environments. In addition to these professional development classes, faculty would be encouraged to establish “teaching communities”. These informal activities are avenues to promote continuous discussions among the faculty teaching adult students in accelerated programs. Faculty could discuss concerns and issues they find when teaching adult learners and share teaching strategies relevant to course content, learning assignments, and exams that have or that have not worked well.

The final phase of the Wajler model’s faculty professional development component involves participation of faculty in on-going faculty-student engagement activities. These faculty-student engagement activities are intended to create venues for bi-directional dialog between adult students and faculty. This provides a setting outside of the classroom for faculty and students to interact and share issues and concerns. These informal communication opportunities could be scheduled two or three times per year to enhance the understanding of both students and faculty. In addition, faculty would also be encouraged to attend a Student Orientation for Adult Learners session at least once a year.

To provide clearer insights into the faculty professional development activities, the following additional details describe each component. These three components: (a) hiring of faculty, (b) professional development opportunities for faculty, and (c) providing on-going engagement activities will channel energy and creativity to meet the challenge of offering an optimal educational environment for adult learners.

*A. Hiring Phase* – The hiring of adult focused faculty is essential to the Wajler model.

Faculty would be selected to teach in an adult accelerated program once they have taken the Zinn (1991) PAEI, successfully accomplished a teaching demonstration, and have been interviewed. The hiring process must, however, be in compliance with the



institution's internal hiring guidelines. Each faculty candidate would provide a 20 to 30 minute demonstration of an interactive teaching demonstration. Faculty eligible to teach in the adult accelerated program would be selected based on their ability to conduct an interactive, teaching demonstration incorporating Knowles' six principles of the adult learner.

- B. *Faculty Professional Development* - Faculty would be provided with multiple options for professional development activities to improve their teaching of the adult student. For example, faculty could be required to attend a course entitled, Teaching Adult Learners. This six week faculty development course, Teaching Adult Learners simulates the accelerated format of the courses they will be teaching. The course is taught in a six week format which is exactly the same length of time a student would have to learn the material in any given course. The objective of this six week course is to better prepare faculty to understand the skills necessary to accommodate adult learners, acclimate their teaching modality to an accelerated format, gain understanding of their educational philosophy as espoused by Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) and gain a comfort level of using technology to enhance the learning process of adults. In addition, faculty could engage in "teaching communities" which would provide time for group discussions to focus on such topics as best classroom practices as well as issues and concerns directly related to the adult learner.
- C. *On-going Faculty-Student Engagement* – Faculty and students would participate in engagement activities that foster better understanding of the adult student. These regularly scheduled faculty-student informal forums will allow for two-way communication between faculty and adult students. Also, a Student Orientation for Adult

Learners session would be developed and held frequently throughout the year for students. Participants in these orientation sessions would be faculty, administrative staff from various student service areas, and adult students. These sessions would provide an additional communication venue for adult students to learn about expectations and demands of accelerated programs, talk with faculty, and discover what services the various student service areas can offer, as well as provide adult students an opportunity to express their college experiences and make suggestions for improvement.

### **Second Model Component: Administrative Staff Professional Development**

Administrative staff from various college departments such as admissions, registration, financial aid, advising, and accounts payable would greatly benefit from professional development opportunities which focus on the needs of the adult learner. The research findings strongly suggest that adult learners felt a lack of support and assistance from the college student service areas. This inattention, and from their perspective a “disregard for their needs as adult students in an accelerated program”, created further barriers and added stress to their already complicated and busy life styles. For some adults, this additional stress was enough to add to the reasons for their withdrawal from the program.

The administrative staff professional development component emphasizes two phases (1) administrative staff professional development activities, and (2) engagement in the Student Orientation for Adult Learners sessions. These activities focus on creating an awareness of the needs of adult learners and gaining an understanding of support service improvements needed to better serve the adult learner.

The first phase requires administrative staff from various community college departments to attend classes about the adult student. These professional development programs can be

provided in any format (face-to-face, online) so that the content and information can be shared at convenient times for the staff. Topics for these professional development programs would include (a) what is an adult learner; (b) what are adult students' particular needs; (c) what is the difference between the adult learner and the younger learner enrolled at community colleges; and (d) how do adults learn (using Knowles' (1980) six assumptions of the adult learner).

The second phase requires administrative staff to participate in adult student orientation sessions. The regularly held Student Orientation for Adult Learners sessions will facilitate communication and discussion among the faculty, adult students, and administrative student service staff. Moreover, these activities will assist administrative staff in re-evaluating the needs of the students, address any perceived roadblocks, and implement services modified for the adult learner, thus enabling adult learners to graduate and attain their personal academic goals.

To provide clearer insights into the administrative staff development activities, the following additional details describe each component. These two phases (1) administrative staff professional development activities, and (2) attending adult student orientation sessions will provide the foundation for administration to better understand the needs of adult learners.

A. *Professional Development Activities* – Student services staff and administrators would attend a course or courses to better understand the adult students. In general, topics would focus on what is an adult student and how their needs differ from the younger students (18 to 24 years). These could be shared in a variety of teaching formats, allowing those working at different times and days on campus the opportunity to obtain the information. The objective of these programs is to better prepare staff to serve the needs of adult learners and for administrators to make decisions and establish procedures that would better assist the adult learner.

- B. *On-going Student Engagement* - Staff and administrators would participate in regularly scheduled Student Orientation for Adult Learners sessions. These orientation sessions are specifically designed to allow for communication and discussion among students, faculty and staff to ultimately offer a better educational experience for the adult learner.

### **Third Model Component: Student Orientation for Adult Learners**

As the research has reaffirmed, there is a great need for the adult learner to realize the demands of an accelerated academic program prior to enrollment. Gaining an early understanding of the level of commitment required, plus faculty expectations of students in an accelerated program, would considerably reduce the level of stress for the adult learner.

Therefore, the Student Orientation for Adult Learners sessions should be developed and held frequently. Potential students and those enrolled in adult accelerated programs would be encouraged to attend. Faculty and student services staff would be present to answer questions and articulate issues specific to adult accelerated programs, helping to eliminate problems and reduce stress, thus leading to improved retention and academic. These orientation sessions could be held as often as needed, but should be frequently offered and have advertised dates, times, and locations.

These orientation sessions for the adult student consist of two important elements: the content regarding accelerated programs and the people involved. First, an orientation session provides a forum for the adult learner enrolled, or thinking about enrolling in an accelerated academic program, to become aware of specific faculty expectations and course or program demands in a condensed format. As most adults have attended traditional courses (12 to 15, or 16 weeks in length), it would greatly benefit their understanding of accelerated courses, which are taught in a very short time period of time (6 weeks), before they enroll in the program. These

orientation sessions would include general topics such as: (a) differences between a course offered in an accelerated format and a course offered in a traditional timeframe; (b) responsibilities and expectations of the student; (c) the role, responsibility, and expectation of the faculty; and (d) available student services (times, locations, contact name with phone number, and email address).

Secondly, the Student Orientation for Adult Learners must include representatives from student services departments, allowing for discussions of what services each area can provide the adult student. Most importantly, in return, this venue allows the adult student an avenue to articulate what student services are needed, share problems they have experienced and make suggestions for improvement. Orientation sessions such as these can be of benefit to both the college and the students.

To provide clearer expectations for the adult learner, the following additional detail describes the Student Orientation for Adult Learners sessions.

- A. *Adult Student Orientation Session*– Adult learners would be required to attend a Student Orientation to Adult Accelerated Program session. This orientation is focused on providing a forum for the adult learners to build awareness and gain knowledge of an adult accelerated academic program.
- B. *Inclusion of Faculty and Student Service Staff*– The orientation session is a tailored engagement activity that supports adult learners. The inclusion of faculty and student service staff allows for a more complete and relevant discussion of the adult student concerns, needs and issues. Also, faculty can convey their expectations of students and student service staff can present how they assist students. This venue would foster an exchange of information and disclose policies, practices, and procedures that would

either hinder or assist the adult student, or help to improve retention rates.

The benefits of the adult student orientation to improve retention and graduation rates would include:

- identifying service barriers,
- modifying student services to be more responsive,
- sharing student expectations of faculty demands,
- clarifying faculty expectations of student work.

### **Assessing Adult Accelerated Programs**

The foundation for continuous quality improvement for an adult accelerated academic program starts with establishing and developing a regularly scheduled assessment timetable.

While this is being established, criteria for assessing the quality and effectiveness of adult accelerated programs must be developed. Below are guidelines which can provide direction for the administrators and faculty involved in addressing these issues.

- (a) Develop a mission statement to guide the actions of the adult accelerated department, convey its overall goal, and direct decisions. It serves as the context within which the department's strategies are formulated to accommodate the needs of adult students. A mission statement should typically be developed by the administrators of the adult program with constructive input from faculty.
- (b) Establish academic program terminal objectives or desired outcomes which precisely convey what the student can do upon graduation from the specific academic program. This crystallizes the identification and establishment of the desired student learning outcomes (SLOs) for all courses located in the particular academic program. From

- these course SLOs, student learning assignments can be created and teaching strategies can be selected using Knowles' (1980) six assumptions as a framework.
- (c) Document the accelerated academic program's impact, efficiency and effectiveness, by the development and implementation of a systematic assessment method of collecting, analyzing relevant data and information. Programmatic evaluation (analysis, feedback, and change) allows for deliberate data-driven improvement of these types of programs. The evaluation process should include the creation of a program assessment matrix or dashboard indicators which is a systematic method of guiding the evaluative process. Additionally, to assist with the undertaking of this critical process, a program review committee should be established consisting of faculty teaching in an adult academic accelerated program, adult students enrolled in an accelerated program, support staff, and administrators.

The need to continue to improve adult accelerated programs requires an annual assessment process. The results of this basic assessment instrument is useful for the following reasons: (a) enhancing the quality of adult accelerated offerings; (b) gaining a better understanding of the needs of adult learners; and (c) improving services that will attract and retain adult learners. A basic worksheet to begin the assessment process for an adult accelerated program is included. This worksheet, Figure 3, can be enlarged and further tailored to each community college and its adult accelerated programs.

Figure 3. *Adult Accelerated Program Quality Assessment Worksheet*

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Changes to be Made for Improvement</b>
What are the characteristics of effective, quality adult accelerated programs?		

What challenges do adult learners face in completing their educational objectives?		
What strategies and programs are needed to effectively assist adult learners?		
What training of faculty and staff is necessary to assist the adult learner?		

Insights gleaned from this study will provide the information needed for community colleges to create a positive adult student learning environment for adult accelerated programs and to improve the recruitment and retention of faculty who are able to teach well in these types of accelerated adult programs. This study shows that adult students like the shortened length of courses in accelerated academic programs, but often find faculty difficult to work with, the assignments overwhelming and not applicable or relevant to their current or future jobs. Participants in this study also found the college student service areas indifferent and unresponsive to their needs and issues. This research corroborates how teaching adult learners in accelerated academic programs requires a more adult-centered teaching approach to encourage student learning, persistence, and gradation. The use of the Wajler adult accelerated program improvement model can provide community colleges a means to improve the quality of adult accelerated programs which are characterized by three components: (a) hiring adult-centered faculty and providing professional development opportunities for faculty; (b) providing professional development and on-going discussions for administrative staff with faculty who teach adult students in accelerated programs; and (c) creating venues for adult learners to obtain realistic expectations of accelerated programs and articulate their special needs.



### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In recent years, community colleges have experienced a substantial amount of pressure to improve the quality of classroom performance and to improve academic success with an emphasis on student retention and completion rates. Adult learners are highly motivated to obtain certificates or degrees, are self-directed, and possess years of work and life experiences to draw upon as they enter each course, bringing a unique perspective to the community college learning environment. Moreover, adult learners are the largest and most rapidly growing demographic group of students in the community college system. Therefore, community colleges should focus a great deal of their resources on the academic success of the adult learner.

Most faculty have established their teaching approach over their years of teaching, yet have not identified specific attributes and qualities regarding teaching adult learners. Even though faculty participants are not aware of their educational philosophy, they instinctively adjust their teaching approach when instructing adult learners. Galbraith (2004) espoused that no matter what kind of faculty approach, whether caring, practical, creative, or intellectual, faculty need to be authentic in their personal teaching foundation, allowing for a meaningful and constructive experience. The awareness of how educational philosophies influence faculty and their knowledge of how adults learn, based on a foundation of Malcolm Knowles' (1980) six assumptions of the adult learner, can enhance the persistence and graduation of adult learners in community college adult accelerated programs. Community college issues and concerns surrounding these challenges would greatly benefit from further research in the three areas.

First, it is clear that adult students react more positively and relate better to faculty who bring real life, practical knowledge into the classroom than to faculty who lectured only from a more theoretical perspective. Therefore, it would be beneficial to gain further data regarding

those faculty who have a combination of recent or current industry or business expertise and educational credentials as compared to those faculty who do not. In addition, it would be prudent to examine if the persistence and graduation rates are improved by those teaching who have no, little or much older industry or business expertise, yet have substantial teaching experience. This area of research may produce insight to assist faculty to adapt their teaching approach to the adult learner. Moreover, this area of research may provide valuable knowledge to assist community college administration to recruit appropriate faculty to teach in such programs and to create the optimal learning environment.

Secondly, Zinn (1991) found, in general, more experienced faculty have a clearly defined educational philosophy that they can use in the classroom. Furthermore, faculty may have established more than one educational philosophy that they utilize in the classroom. In contrast, the less experienced faculty may still be developing their beliefs and values about education and may often be influenced by the beliefs and values held by others. Therefore, they may not be as aware of their educational philosophy and have not formulated one teaching approach, let alone more than one educational philosophy to utilize in the classroom. Further research would be important to gain an understanding if utilizing more than one educational philosophy would influence the retention and graduation of adult learners, particularly in accelerated academic programs.

Lastly, the administrators of four-year post-secondary institutions and policy makers would benefit from gaining insights into the factors affecting retention and transfer rates of adult students graduating from two-year accelerated academic programs. Adult students often have a decision to make as they enter community colleges to either pursue their degree in a traditional modality (15 to 16 weeks) or in an accelerated modality (6 to 8 weeks). Therefore, further

research would provide information regarding factors which are barriers and/or facilitating agents of graduates of two-year accelerated academic programs as they begin to examine transfer to four-year institutions. Moreover, it would be beneficial to gather data, regarding these adult learners, and categorize it into demographic commonalities and differences such as age group, gender, and ethnicity, with the purpose of identifying if these characteristics influence successful transfer and completion of a bachelor degree. These findings could assist in developing and/or improving the transfer processes of adult students of adult accelerated programs to four-year institutions.

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## APPENDIX A

### Informed Consent – Faculty Focus Group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October, 2010 to January, 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Nancy S. Wajler, a doctoral student at National-Louis University, located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled: Does Faculty Educational Philosophy Influence the Persistence of Adult Learners? The purpose of this study is to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influence the persistence and graduation of adult learners in community college adult programs.

I understand that my participation will consist of a focus group session which may be audio-recorded lasting 60 to 90 minutes. I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that my anonymity will be maintained and the information I provide confidential.

I understand that only the researcher, Nancy S. Wajler, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, audio recordings, documents and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me, no greater than encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be used to assist adult students in pursuing and completing their educational objectives.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Nancy S. Wajler, Harper College, 1200 Algonquin, Palatine, IL 60067. Phone: 847-925-6910 or E-mail: [nwajler@harpercollege.edu](mailto:nwajler@harpercollege.edu).

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603. Phone: 312-261-3534 or E-mail: [rebecca.lake@nl.edu](mailto:rebecca.lake@nl.edu)

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent – Student Focus Group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October, 2010 to January, 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Nancy S. Wajler, a doctoral student at National-Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled, Does Faculty Educational Philosophy Influence the Persistence of Adult Learners? The purpose of this study is to explore how and in what ways faculty educational philosophy influence the persistence and graduation of adult learners in community college adult programs.

I understand that my participation will consist of a focus group session which may be audio-recorded lasting 60 to 90 minutes. I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that my anonymity will be maintained and the information I provide confidential.

I understand that only the researcher, Nancy S. Wajler, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, audio files, documents and field notes from the focus group in which I participated.

I understand that my exposure to risks is minimal, no greater than that encountered in everyday life. Further, the information gained from this study could be used to assist adult students in pursuing and completing their educational objectives.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Nancy S. Wajler, Harper College, 1200 Algonquin, Palatine, IL 60067. Phone: 847-925-6910 or E-mail: [nwajler@harpercollege.edu](mailto:nwajler@harpercollege.edu).

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603. Phone 312-261-3534 or E-mail: [rebecca.lake@nl.edu](mailto:rebecca.lake@nl.edu).

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### Focus Group Questions – Faculty Participants

Driving Questions	Interview Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How and in what ways does the educational philosophies of faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs influence student program completion?</b></li> </ul>	<p>After taking the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory assessment, what did you discover about your educational philosophy?</p> <p>Do you feel this is an accurate reflection of your teaching approach in the adult learner accelerated program?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What are faculty expectations of adult learners enrolled in community college adult accelerated programs?</b></li> </ul>	<p>What are your expectations regarding adult learners in adult accelerated programs?</p> <p>What do you believe strengthens the persistence of adult learners in adult accelerated programs?</p> <p>Knowing your educational philosophy, how would this teaching philosophy hinder or enhance the persistence of adult learners in accelerated programs?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What recommendations does faculty have for adult learners to enhance their persistence and graduation in community college adult accelerated programs?</b></li> </ul>	<p>Knowing your educational philosophy, what recommendations do you have that would enhance adult learners with their persistence in accelerated programs?</p>

## APPENDIX D

### Focus Group Questions – Student Graduates

Driving Questions	Interview Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What are adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching strategies in community college adult accelerated programs?</b></li> </ul>	<p>What did you find attractive about the adult accelerated program?</p>
	<p>What expectations did you have as you entered into the adult accelerated program?</p> <p>Did the way or manner which faculty taught the course have any influence on your decision to stay in the adult accelerated program?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What recommendations do adult learners have for faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs?</b></li> </ul>	<p>What were the facilitators that assisted you to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate?</p>
	<p>Were there any barriers you had to overcome to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate?</p>
	<p>Describe what recommendations you can give faculty to assist adult students to stay in the adult accelerated program and graduate.</p>

## APPENDIX E

**Focus Group Questions – Student Non-graduates**

Driving Questions	Interview Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What are adult learners' expectations of the faculty teaching strategies in community college adult accelerated programs?</b></li> <li>• <b>What recommendations do adult learners have for faculty teaching in community college adult accelerated programs?</b></li> </ul>	<p>What did you find attractive about the adult accelerated program?</p> <p>What expectations did you have as you entered into the adult accelerated program?</p> <p>Did the way or manner which faculty taught the course have any influence on your decision to leave the adult accelerated program?</p> <p>Describe the facilitators that led you to the decision to leave the adult accelerated program?</p> <p>Describe other problems and barriers excluding the program which led you to the decision to leave the adult accelerated program.</p> <p>Describe what recommendations you can give faculty to assist adult students to stay in the adult accelerated program.</p>



**APPENDIX F****Demographic Questionnaire – Faculty Participants**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this demographic questionnaire for this study.

1. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. **Age Group:**

- ☐ 25 – 30 years
- ☐ 31 – 35 years
- ☐ 36 – 40 years
- ☐ 41 – 45 years
- ☐ 46 – 50 years
- ☐ 51 – 55 years
- ☐ 56 – 60 years
- ☐ Over 60 years

3. **Ethnicity:**

- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan
- ☐ Black, non-Hispanic
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White, non-Hispanic

4. **Current Teaching Position:**

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years teaching fulltime \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_

5. **What is your Zinn Educational Philosophy?**

- Liberalism
- Behaviorism
- Progressivism

- Humanism
- Radicalism

**6. Please list all degrees and certificates you have earned:**

<b>Degree/Certificate</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Year</b>

**7. Please list all accelerated courses you have taught:**

<b>Courses</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Years Taught</b>

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your careful responses will provide substantive depth and clarity to this study and will aid in providing necessary context.

Nancy Wajler  
 Doctoral Student  
 National-Louis University  
[nwajler@harpercollege.edu](mailto:nwajler@harpercollege.edu)  
 847-925-6910

**APPENDIX G****Demographic Questionnaire - Student Participants**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this demographic questionnaire for this study.

1. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. **Age Group:**

- ☐ 25 – 30 years
- ☐ 31 – 35 years
- ☐ 36 – 40 years
- ☐ 41 – 45 years
- ☐ 46 – 50 years
- ☐ 51 – 55 years
- ☐ 56 – 60 years
- ☐ Over 60 years

3. **Ethnicity:**

- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan
- ☐ Black, non-Hispanic
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White, non-Hispanic

4. **Current Position:** Are you currently employed? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in current position: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of hours working per week: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Please list colleges you have attended:**

Course of Study	College	Location	Year

**6. Have you taken adult accelerated courses prior to Harper College?**

\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_ No    If so, where: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your careful responses will provide substantive depth and clarity to this study and will aid in providing necessary context.

Nancy Wajler  
 Doctoral Student  
 National-Louis University  
[nwajler@harpercollege.edu](mailto:nwajler@harpercollege.edu)  
 847-925-6910

## APPENDIX H

### PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION INVENTORY

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION

Each of the fifteen (15) items on the Inventory begins with an incomplete sentence, followed by five different options that might complete the sentence. Underneath each option is a scale from 1 to 7, followed by a small letter in parentheses. For the present, ignore the letters; use only the numbers on the scale.

To complete the Inventory, read each sentence stem and each optional phrase that completes it. On the 1-7 scale, **CIRCLE** the number that most closely indicates how you feel about each option. The scale goes from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with a neutral point (4) if you don't have any opinion or aren't sure about a particular option.

Continue through all the items, reading the sentence stem and indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the options. Please respond to every option, even if you feel neutral about it. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.**

As you go through the Inventory, respond according to what you most frequently or most likely do. If it helps you to respond more easily, you may want to focus on a specific course that you teach. If you do focus on a particular course, choose one that you feel most comfortable teaching—one that you think best reflects your preferred style of teaching.

HAVE FUN!

[L.M. Zinn, PAEL 1983/1994, Lifelong Learning Options, Boulder, CO 80303]

STRONGLY DISAGREE			NEUTRAL			STRONGLY AGREE	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

#### 1. IN PLANNING AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY, I AM MOST LIKELY TO:

Identify, in conjunction with learners, significant social and/or political issues and plan learning activities around them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (h)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Clearly identify the results I want and develop a program [class, workshop] that will achieve those results.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (c)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Begin with a lesson plan that organizes what I plan to teach, when and how.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)

Assess learners' needs and develop valid learning activities based on those needs.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)

Consider the areas of greatest interest to the learners and plan to deal with them, regardless of what they may be.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

---

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

## 2. PEOPLE LEARN BEST:

When the new knowledge is presented from a problem-solving approach.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (x)

When the learning activity [is clearly structured and] provides for practice and repetition.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (w)

Through dialogue [discussion] with other learners and a group coordinator.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (z)

When they are free to explore, without the constraints of a "system."

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (y)

From an "expert" who knows what he or she is talking about.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (v)

STRONGLY DISAGREE			NEUTRAL		STRONGLY AGREE	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### 3. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ADULT EDUCATION IS:

To facilitate personal development on the part of the learner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(f)
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

To increase learners' awareness of the need for social change and to enable them to effect such change.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(h)
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

To develop conceptual or theoretical understanding.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(a)
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

To establish the learners' capacity to solve individual and societal problems.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(d)
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

To develop the learners' competency and mastery of specific [knowledge and] skills.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(c)
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

STRONGLY DISAGREE			NEUTRAL		STRONGLY AGREE	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### 4. MOST OF WHAT PEOPLE KNOW:

Is a result of consciously pursuing their goals, solving problem as they go.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(x)
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

They have learned through critical [reflective] thinking focused on important social and political issues.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (z)

They have learned through a trial-and-feedback process.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (w)

They have gained through self-discovery rather than some “teaching” process.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (y)

They have acquired through a systematic [comprehensive] educational process.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (v)

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

## 5. DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A [LEARNING] ACTIVITY:

Should be made mostly by the learner in consultation with a facilitator.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)

Should be based on what learners know and what the teacher believes they should know at the end of the activity.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (c)

Should be based on a consideration of key social, [political] and/or cultural situations.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (h)

Should be based on a consideration of the learners’ needs, interests and problems.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)



Should be based on careful analysis by the teacher of the material to be covered and the concepts to be taught.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

---

#### 6. GOOD ADULT EDUCATORS START PLANNING INSTRUCTION:

By considering the end behaviors [specific outcomes] they are looking for and the most efficient ways of producing them in learners.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (w)

By identifying [everyday] problems that can be solved as a result of the instruction.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (x)

By clarifying the [content] concepts and/or theoretical principles to be taught.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (v)

By clarifying key social and political issues that affect the lives of the learners.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (z)

By asking learners to identify what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (y)

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

---

#### 7. AS AN ADULT EDUCATOR, I AM MOST SUCCESSFUL IN SITUATIONS:

That are unstructured and flexible enough to follow learners' interests.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)  
 That are fairly structured, with clear learning objectives and built-in feedback to the learners.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (c)  
 Where I can focus on practical skills and knowledge that can be put to use in solving problems.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)  
 Where the scope of the new material is fairly clear and the subject matter is logically organized.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)  
 Where the learners have some awareness of social and political issues and are willing to explore the impact of such issues on their daily lives.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (h)  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE                      NEUTRAL                      STRONGLY AGREE

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

---

#### 8. IN PLANNING AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY, I TRY TO CREATE:

The real world-problems and all-and to develop learners' capacities for dealing with it.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (x)

A setting in which learners are encouraged to examine their beliefs and values and to raise critical questions.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (z)

A controlled environment that attracts and holds the learners, moving them systematically towards the objectives.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (w)

A clear outline of the content and the concepts to be taught [learned].

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (v)

A supportive climate that facilitates self-discovery and interaction.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (y)

	STRONGLY DISAGREE		NEUTRAL			STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

---

#### 9. THE LEARNERS' FEELINGS DURING THE LEARNING PROCESS:

Must be brought to the surface in order for learners to become truly involved in their learning.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (h)

Provide energy that can be focused on problems or questions.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)

Will probably have a great deal to do with the way they approach their learning.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)

Are used by the skilled adult educator to accomplish the learning objectives.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (c)

Are likely to get in the way of teaching [and learning] by diverting the learners' attention.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)

	STRONGLY DISAGREE		NEUTRAL			STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. THE TEACHING METHODS I [PREFER TO] USE:

Focus on problem-solving and present real challenges to the learner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (x)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Emphasize practice and feedback to the learner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (w)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Are mostly non-directive, encouraging the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (y)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Involve learners in dialogue [discussion] and critical examination of controversial issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (z)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Are determined primarily by the subject or content to be covered .

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (v)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

11. WHEN LEARNERS ARE UNINTERESTED IN A SUBJECT, IT IS [PROBABLY] BECAUSE:

They do not realize how serious the consequences of not understanding or [not] learning the subject may be.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (h)
---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

They do not see any benefit for their daily lives.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)

The teacher does not know enough about the subject or is unable to make it interesting to the learner.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)

They are not getting adequate [practice or] feedback during the learning process.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (c)

They are not ready to learn it or it is not a high priority for them personally.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

---

## 12. DIFFERENCES AMONG ADULT LEARNERS:

Are relatively unimportant as long as the learners gain a common base of understanding through the learning experience.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (v)

Enable them to learn best on their own time and in their own way.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (y)

Are primarily due to differences in their life experience, and will usually lead them to make different applications of new knowledge and skills to their own situation.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (x)

Arise from their particular cultural and social situation and should [not] be minimized even as they recognize common needs and problems.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (z)

Will not interfere with their learning if each learner is given adequate opportunity for practice and reinforcement.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (w)

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

---

### 13. EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Is not of great importance and may not be possible, because the impact of learning may not be evident until much later.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (h)

Should be built into the system, so that learners will continually receive feedback and can adjust their performance accordingly.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (c)

Is best done by the learners themselves, for their own purposes.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)

Lets me know how much learners have increased their conceptual understanding of new material.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)

Is best accomplished when the learner encounters a problem, either in the learning setting or the real world, and successfully resolves it.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)

STRONGLY DISAGREE			NEUTRAL		STRONGLY AGREE	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. MY PRIMARY ROLE AS A TEACHER OF ADULTS IS TO:

Guide learners through [structured] learning activities with well-directed feedback.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (w)

Systematically lead learners in acquiring new information and understanding underlying theories and concepts.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (v)

Help learners identify and solve problems [better].

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (x)

Increase learners' awareness of environmental, social [and political] issues and help them learn how to have an impact on these situations.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (z)

Facilitate, but not to direct, learning activities.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (y)

STRONGLY DISAGREE			NEUTRAL		STRONGLY AGREE	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. IN THE END, IF LEARNERS HAVE NOT LEARNED WHAT WAS TAUGHT:

The teacher has not actually "taught".

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (a)

They need to repeat the experience, or a portion of it.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (c)

They may have learned something else which they consider just as interesting or useful.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (f)

They do not realize how learning will enable them to significantly influence society.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (h)

It is probably because they are unable to make practical application of new knowledge to problems in their daily lives.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7 (d)



## SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

After completing the inventory, go back to your responses and find the small letter in parentheses to the far right of each rating scale. This is a code letter for scoring the inventory. First, transfer each of your numbers on the rating scale to the scoring Matrix on the next page. For example, for item #1 if you circled a 5 for option (h). Item #1 has five different responses: h, c, a, d, f. Record all five of your responses item #1, then continue with #2 - #15. When you finish, there will be numbers in every other square in the Matrix (like a checkerboard).

[PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE AND COMPLETE THE SCORING MATRIX.]

### PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION INVENTORY SCORING MATRIX

Item	a	v	c	w	d	x	f	y	h	z
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
Sub T										
FINAL SCORES										
	(a+v)		(c+w)		(d+x)		(f+y)		(h+z)	

### Interpretation:

#### WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

Each of your scores reflects a particular philosophy of adult education:

Liberal, Humanistic, Behaviorist, Radical, or Progressive Adult Education.

Your highest score reflects the philosophy that is closest to your own beliefs; your lowest score reflects a philosophy that is least like yours. For example, a score of 95 – 105 indicates a strong agreement with a given philosophy; a score of 15-25 indicates a strong disagreement with a given philosophy. If your score is between 55 and 65, it probably means that you neither agree nor disagree with a particular philosophy.

Note that there is no “right” or “wrong” philosophy. The Inventory is designed only to give you information about your own beliefs; not to make judgments about those beliefs. You may want to give some thought to how your beliefs influence your actions as an adult educator.

Zinn, L. M. (1991). Retrieved from  
[http://www25.brinkster.com/educ605/paei\\_howtouse.htm](http://www25.brinkster.com/educ605/paei_howtouse.htm)

## **APPENDIX I - Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement**

This confidentiality form articulates the agreement made between Nancy Wajler, the researcher, and [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANY OF A PROFESSIONAL TRANSCRIBER].

I understand and acknowledge that by transcribing the audio files provided to me by Nancy Wajler, that I will be exposed to confidential information about the research study and the research participants. In providing transcription services, at no time will I reveal or discuss any of the information of which I have been exposed.

In addition, at no time will I maintain copies of the electronic or paper documents generated. Further, upon completing each transcription, I agree to provide the electronic and paper documents to the researcher:

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[nwajler@harpercollege.edu](mailto:nwajler@harpercollege.edu)  
847-925-6910

I understand that breach of this agreement as described above could result in personal and professional harm to the research participants for which I will be held legally responsible.

Transcriptionist's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX J

## Faculty Focus Group Participants' Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) Scores

Faculty A					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
71	75	<b>84</b>	77	68	
Faculty B					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
<b>92</b>	90	91	88	87	
Faculty C					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
83	90	<b>91</b>	72	49	
Faculty D					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
<b>89</b>	85	85	74	58	
Faculty E					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
<b>73</b>	72	72	61	58	
Faculty F					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
60	68	<b>87</b>	76	74	
Faculty G					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
57	74	<b>78</b>	77	73	
Faculty H					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
65	83	<b>85</b>	78	80	
Faculty I					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>	86	75	74	
Faculty J					
<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>	
76	77	<b>100</b>	83	96	

Faculty K

<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>
75	<b>95</b>	89	81	82

Faculty L

<b>liberal</b>	<b>behaviorist</b>	<b>progressive</b>	<b>humanist</b>	<b>radical</b>
75	<b>95</b>	89	81	82

**APPENDIX K - Student Employer, Title, Years in Current Position and Work Hours Per Week**

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Number of Years in Current Position</b>	<b>Number of Work Hours Per Week</b>
Northwest Community Hospital	Financial Counselor	10	40
Motorola Solutions, Inc.	Global Commodity Manager	5	55
ADP	Team Lead Support	2	60
National Louis University	Student Financial Aid	2	
Sara Lee	Manager	6	40
Unemployed			
N/A	Financial Analyst	2	60
Accero	Support Consultant	7	45
GE Healthcare	Biomedical Engineering	4	50
Wheeling Township	Case Worker	2	32
Applied Communications Group	Union Administrator	3	30
Unemployed			
ATT	Business Manager	3	50
Village of Barrington	Firefighter/Paramedic	16	56
Unemployed			
Prefer not to disclose			
Elk Grove Village Police	Officer	34	52
Sara Lee	Key Account Manager	4	40
AT&T Services, Inc.	Sr. Accountant	12	40
Village of Schaumburg	EMS Coordinator	32	40
Jordan, Mozer & Associates	Bookkeeper	5	45
Fellowes Inc	Import Lead	8	40
Prudential Starck, Realtors	Realtor	1	60
Housing Authority of Elgin	Property Manager		50
Unemployed			
Prospect Heights Fire Department	Deputy Chief	10	55
Logsdon Consultation Services	President	5	60
True Value Company	Supervisor	9	40
Unemployed	N/A		
Unemployed	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fry, Inc.	Sr. Project Manager	1	45
Hitachi High Technologies	Staff Accountant	3	45
Resurrection Medical Center	Staffing Coordinator	34	40
UIC	Accounting Clerk	1	38
IBM	Service Delivery Manager	16	55
Experian	Membership Analyst	6	40
Parker			
Hannifin	Marketing Specialist II	6	40

Reinders, Inc.	Business Manager	8	50
Woodfield Pawn	President	1	70
Fellows Staffing	Recruiting Specialist	1	40
Faxitron X-Ray	Customer Administrator	4	40
Village of Elmwood Park	Police Officer	3	45
Glenview School District	Technology Associate	8	40
Compliance11	Technical Account Manager	1	40
Alliant Credit Union		4	40
WMS Gaming Inc.	Senior Staff Licensing		40
Hoffman Estates Fire Department	Captain (Retired)	3	56
School District	Data Processing	30	40
Flying Cargo		1	40
Carpenters Union			
Jack in the Box	Assistant Manager	2	45
United Airlines	Sr. Market Rep	3	40
Carlin O'Brien, Inc.	Category Analyst	12	50
Hoffman Estates Police Department	Police Sergeant	17	40

**APPENDIX L - College Attended and Course of Study of Students**

<b>Course of Study</b>	<b>College/University</b>	<b>Years Attended</b>
Management	Harper College	3
Business	De Paul University	2
Management Marketing	Romania University	5
Business Management	National Louis University	2
Liberal Studies	Roosevelt University	2
Business Administration	Harper College	1
Finance	University of Missouri	4
Business	National Lewis	2
Electronics	DeVry University	2
Business Management	Harper College	2
Pre-Law	Loyola University	3
Accounting	Vikram University	3
Marketing	Harper College	3
N/A	University of Illinois	3
Business / HR	Harper / Mesa / Triton	35
Law Enforcement	Wright College	
Marketing	Harper College	
Management	Harper College	2
Fire Science	Harper College	2
General	Wright College	1
Management/business	Harper College	3
Accounting	University of Phoenix	2
Marketing/Management	Harper College	
Management	Harper College	2
N/A	Harper College	1
Emergency Management	Harper College	1.5
Business Management	Harper College	3
Business Management	Harper College	3
Management	Harper College	2
Economics	Northwestern University	1
Finance	Harper College	4
Medical	Wright College	1
Finance	Harper College	2
Liberal Arts	DePaul University	2
Management	Harper College	2
Liberal Arts	University of Illinois	1
General Education	Harper College	1
Financial Services	Harper College	
General	Harper College	4
Management	Harper College	7
Business	Harper College	1
Computer	Harper College	1



General Studies	College of DuPage	1
Management	Harper College	2
Finance	Harper College	2
	Harper College	1
	Harper College	4
Business Management	Harper College	1
IT Management	DeVry University	1
Aviation Flight	Daniel Webster College	3
General Education	Harper College	2
Law enforcement	Harper College	2